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THE

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT.

Sermons Preached and Revised

BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

DURING THE YEAR 1872.

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TO

THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,

IN

THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,

BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,

WORLD WITHOUT END,

AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE FREE GRACE OF GOD,

HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GLORIOUS MASTER AND THE SWOONING DISCIPLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 7TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—Revelations i. 17, 18.

Low thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ are exceedingly mischievous to believers. If you sink your estimate of him you shift everything else in the same proportion. He who thinks lightly of the Saviour thinks so much the less of the evil of *sin;* and, consequently, he becomes callous as to the past, careless as to the present, and venturesome as to the future. He thinks little of the punishment due to sin, because he has small notions of the atonement made for sin. Christian activity for right is also abated, as well as holy horror of wrong. He who thinks lightly of the Lord Jesus renders to him but small *service;* he does not estimate the Redeemer's love at a rate high enough to stir his soul to ardour; if he does not count the blood wherewith he was redeemed an unholy thing, yet he thinks it a small matter, not at all sufficient to claim from him life-long service. Gratitude is weak when favours are undervalued. He serves little who loves little, and he loves little who has no sense of having been greatly beloved. The man who thinks lightly of Christ also has but poor comfort as to his own *security.* With a little Saviour I am still in danger, but if he be the mighty God, able to save unto the uttermost, then am I safe in his protecting hand, and my consolations are rich and abounding. In these, and a thousand other ways, an unworthy estimate of our Lord will prove most solemnly injurious. The Lord deliver us from this evil.

If our conceptions of the Lord Jesus are very enlarged, they will only be his due. We cannot exaggerate here. He deserves higher praise than we can ever render to him. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is he above our loftiest conceptions. Even when the angels strike their loudest notes, and chant his praises most exultingly on their highest festal days, the music falls far short of his excellence. He is higher than

a seraph's most soaring thought! Rise then, my brethren, as on eagle's wings, and let your adoring souls magnify and extol the Lord your Saviour.

When our thoughts of Jesus are expanded and elevated, we obtain right ideas upon other matters. In the light of his love and atoning sacrifice, we see the depth of the degradation from which such a Redeemer has uplifted us, and we hate, with all our hearts, the sins which pierced such an altogether lovely one, and made it needful for the Lord of life to die. Forming some adequate estimate of what Jesus has done for us, our gratitude grows, and with our gratitude our love — while love compels us to consecration, and consecration suggests heroic self-denying actions. Then are we bold to speak for him, and ready, if needs be, to suffer for him; while we feel we could give up all we have to increase his glory, without so much as dreaming that we had made a sacrifice.

Let your thoughts of Christ be high, and your delight in him will be high too; your sense of security will be strong, and with that sense of security will come the sacred joy and peace which always keep the heart which confidently reposes in the Mediator's hands. If thou wouldst thyself be raised, let thy thoughts of Christ be raised. If thou wouldst rise above these earthly toys, thou must have higher and more elevated thoughts of him who is high above all things. Earth sinks as Jesus rises. Honor the Son even as thou wouldst honor the Father, and, in so doing, thy soul shall be sanctified and brought into closer fellowship with the great Father of Spirits, whose delight it is to glorify his Son.

My object, this morning, is to suggest some few truths to your recollection which may help to set the Lord Jesus on a glorious high throne within your hearts. My motto, this morning, will be—

> "Bring forth the royal diadem
> And crown him Lord of all."

My anxiety is that he may be crowned with many crowns in all these many hearts, and that you may now perform those exercises of faith, those delightful acts of adoring love, which shall bring to him great glory.

I. Coming to the text, the first thing we notice in it is THE DISCIPLE OVERPOWERED. We will meditate a little while upon that. John writes, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

The beloved disciple was favoured with an unusual vision of his glorified Lord. In the blaze of that revelation even his eagle eye was dimmed, and his holy soul was overwhelmed. He was overpowered, but not with ecstacy. At first sight it would have seemed certain that excess of delight would have been John's most prominent feeling; it would appear certain that to see his long lost Master, whom he had so dearly loved, would have caused a rush of joy to John's soul, and that if overpowered at all, it would have been with ecstatic bliss. That it was not so is clear from the fact that our Lord said to him, "Fear not." Fear was far more in the ascendant than holy joy. I will not say that John was unhappy, but, certainly, it was not delight which prostrated him at the Saviour's feet; and I gather from this that if we, in our present embodied state, were favoured with an unveiled vision of Christ, it would not make a heaven for us; we may think it would,

but we know not what spirit we are of. Such new wine, if put into these old bottles, would cause them to burst. Not heaven, but deadly faintness would be the result of the beatific vision, if granted to these earthly eyes. We should not say, if we could behold the King in his beauty, as we now are, "I gazed upon him, and my heart leaped for joy," but like John we should have to confess, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead." There is a time for everything, and this period of our sojourn in flesh and blood is not the season for seeing the Redeemer face to face: that vision will be ours when we are fully prepared for it. We are as yet too feeble to bear the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I do not say but what we are so prepared by his grace that, if now he took us away from this body, we should be able to bear the splendour of his face; but, I do say, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and that when, as an exception to the rule, a mortal man is permitted to behold his Lord, his flesh and blood are made to feel the sentence of death within themselves, and to fall as if slain by the revelation of the Lord. We ought, therefore, to thank God that "he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." That face which shines as the sun in its strength, manifests its love by wearing as yet a concealing veil. Be grateful, that while you are to be here to serve him, and to do his will in suffering for him, he does not deprive you of your power to serve or suffer, by overwhelming you with excessive revelations. It is an instance of the glory of God's grace that he conceals his majesty from his people, and wraps clouds and darkness round about him; this he does, not to deny his saints a bliss which they might covet, but to preserve them from an unseasonable joy, which, as yet, they are not capable of bearing. We shall see him as he is, when we shall be like him, but not till then. That for a while we may be able to perform the duties of this mortal life, and not lie perpetually stretched like dead men at his feet, he doth not manifest himself to us in the clear light which shone upon the seer of Patmos.

I beg you to notice with care this beloved disciple in his fainting fit, and note first, *the occasion* of it. He say, "I saw *him*." This it was that made him faint with fear. "I saw HIM." He had seen him on earth, but not in his full glory as the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. When our Saviour dwelt among men, in order to their redemption, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant; for this reason he restrained the flashings of his Deity, and the godhead shone through the manhood with occasional and softened rays. But now, Jesus was resplendent as the ancient of days, girt with a golden girdle, with a countenance outshining the sun in its strength, and this even the best beloved apostle could not endure. He could gaze with dauntless eye upon the throne of jasper and the rainbow of emerald, he could view with rapture the sea of glass like unto crystal, and the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, but the vision of the Lord himself was too much for him. He who quailed not when the doors of both heaven and hell were opened to him in vision, yet fell lifeless when he saw the Lord. None either in earth or heaven can compare with Jesus in glory. Oh for the day when we shall gaze upon his glory and partake in it. Such is his

sacred will concerning us. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." To bear that sight we shall need to be purified and strengthened. God himself must enlarge and strengthen our faculties, for as yet, like the disciples upon Tabor, we should be bewildered by the brightness.

Here was the occasion of his faintness. But what was *the reason* why a sight of Christ so overcame him? I take it we have the reason in the text, it was partly fear. But, why fear? Was not John beloved of the Lord Jesus? Did he not also know the Saviour's love to him? Yes, but for all that, he was afraid, or else the Master would not have said to him, "Fear not." That fear originated partly in a sense of his own weakness and insignificance in the presence of the divine strength and greatness. How shall an insect live in the furnace of the sun? How can mortal eye behold unquenched the light of Deity, or mortal ear hear that voice which is as many waters? We are such infirmity, folly, and nothingness, that, if we have but a glimpse of omnipotence, awe and reverence prostrate us to the earth. Daniel tells us that when he saw the great vision by the river Hiddekel, there remained no strength in him, for his comeliness was turned in him into corruption, and he fell into a deep sleep upon his face. John, also, at that time, perhaps, perceived more impressively than ever the purity and immaculate holiness of Christ: and, being conscious of his own imperfection, he felt like Isaiah when he cried "Woe is me, I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts." Even his faith, though fixed upon the Lord our righteousness, was not able to bear him up under the first surprising view of uncreated holiness. Methinks his feelings were like those of the patriarch of Uz, when he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The most spiritual and sanctified minds, when they fully perceive the majesty and holiness of God, are so greatly conscious of the great disproportion between themselves and the Lord, that they are humbled and filled with holy awe, and even with dread and alarm. The reverence which is commendable is pushed by the infirmity of our nature into a fear which is excessive, and that which is good in itself is made deadly unto us; so prone are we to err on the one side or the other.

There is no doubt, too, that a part of the fear which caused John to swoon arose from a partial ignorance or forgetfulness of his Lord. Shall we charge this upon one who wrote one of the gospels, and three choice epistles? Yes, it was doubtless so, because the Master went on to instruct and teach him in order to remove his fear. He needed fresh knowledge or old truths brought home with renewed power, in order to cure his dread. As soon as he knew his Lord he recovered his strength. The wonderful person who then stood before him bade him know that he was the first and the last, the ever living and Almighty Lord. The knowledge of Jesus is the best remedy for fears: when we are better acquainted with our Lord we part company with half our doubts—these bats and owls cannot bear the sun. Jesus in his person, work, offices, and relations, is a mine of consolation; every truth which is

connected with him is an argument against fear: when our heart shall be filled with perfect love to him fear will be cast out, as Satan was cast down from heaven. Study then your Lord. Make it your life's object to know him. Seek the Holy Spirit's illumination, and the choice privilege of fellowship, and your despondency and distress will vanish as night birds fly to hide themselves when the day breaketh. It is folly to walk in sorrow when we might constantly rejoice. We do not read that John was any more afraid after the Lord had discoursed lovingly upon his own glorious person and character. That divine enlightenment which was given to his mind, purged from it any secret mistake and misjudgment which had created excessive fear.

But, while we thus notice the occasion and the reasons, we must not forget *the extent* to which John was overpowered. He says, "I fell at his feet as dead." He does not say in a partial swoon, or overcome with amazement: he uses a very strong description, "I fell at his feet as dead." He was not dead, but he was "as dead;" that is to say, he could see no more, the blaze of Jesus' face had blinded him; he could hear no more, the voice like the sound of many waters had stunned his ear; no bodily faculty retained its power. His soul, too, had lost consciousness under the pressure put upon it; he was unable to think much less to act. He was stripped not only of self-glory and strength, but almost of life itself. This is by no means a desirable natural condition, but it is much to be coveted spiritually. It is an infinite blessing to us to be utterly emptied, stripped, spoiled, and slain before the Lord. Our strength is our weakness, our life is our death, and when both are entirely gone, we begin to be strong, and in very deed to live. To lie at Jesus' feet is a right experience; to lie there as sick and wounded is better, but to lie there as dead is best of all; a man is taught in the mysteries of the kingdom, who comes to that. Moses with dim legal light needs to be told to put off his shoe from off his foot in the presence of the Lord of Hosts, but John is manifestly far in advance of him, because he lies lower, and is like a dead man before the Infinite Majesty. How blessed a death is death in Christ! How divine a thing is life in him. If I might see Christ at this moment upon the terms of instant death, I would joyfully accept the offer, the bliss would far exceed the penalty. But as for the death of all within us, that is of the flesh and of fallen nature, it is beyond measure desirable, and if for nothing else, my soul would pant more and more to see Jesus. May that two-edged sword which cometh out of his mouth smite all my besetting sins; may the brightness of his countenance scorch and burn up in me the very roots of evil: may he mount his white horse and ride through my soul conquering and to conquer, casting out of me all that is of the old dragon and his inventions, and bringing every thought into subjection to himself. There would I lie at his dear conquering feet, slain by his mighty grace.

Only one other reflection while we look at this fainting apostle, observe well *the place* where he was overpowered. Oh, lovely thought. "I fell as dead;" but where? "I fell *at his feet* as dead." It matters not what aileth us if we lie at Jesus' feet. Better be dead there than alive anywhere else. He is ever gentle and tender, never breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax. In proportion as he perceives that

our weakness is manifest to us, in that degree will he display his tenderness. He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young; feebleness wins on him. When he sees a dear disciple prostrate at his feet, he is ready at once to touch him with the hand of his familiar love, and to revive him by his own strength. "He restoreth my soul." "He giveth power unto the faint." He saith unto our pitiful weakness, "Fear not, I am the first and the last." To be as dead were not desirable, but to be as dead at Jesus' feet is safe and profitable. Well doth our poet say, when expressing his desire to escape from all worldly bonds.

> "But oh, for this, no strength have I,
> My strength is at his feet to lie."

II. And now, having seen the disciple overpowered, I shall ask your consideration of THAT SAME DISCIPLE RESTORED. He was not long in the condition of death, for the Master laid his right hand upon him, and said to him, "Fear not." Here then, we shall notice, that when the children of God become exceeding faint and feeble, and their own sense of impurity and nothingness becomes painful, and even killing to them, the Lord has ways of restoring and reviving their spirits.

And first, he does it by *a condescending approach*. "He laid his hand upon me." It is noticeable, that in the great cures which our Saviour wrought, he almost always touched the patient. He could with a word have healed, but to prove his fellowship with the sick, he put his hand upon the leper, and upon the blind eye, and touched the deaf ear; thus manifesting his condescending contact with the infirmities of our nature. The Master could have spoken a word to John, and have revived him; but he did not stand at a distance, or guard himself with a "Touch me not;" but, instead of that, he commenced his cure with a touch. No other hand could have revived the apostle, but the hand which was pierced for him had matchless power. There is mighty healing in the royal hand of our Immanuel. When the Holy Spirit inspires us with a sense of the relationship which Christ bears to us, of the sympathy which Christ feels with us, of the kinship and fellow-feeling which reign in Jesus' breast, then are we comforted. To know that he is not ashamed to call us brethren is a well-spring of comfort to a tried child of God; to feel his presence, to perceive the touch of his hand, and to hear him say: "I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God," this is new life to our waning spirits. Oh, what bliss is this. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." He is a brother born for adversity, a sympathetic and tender friend, touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "He laid his hand upon me." O child of God, pray for a manifestation of the kinsman Christ to thy soul; ask that he would instruct thee as to the fact that he enters into thy grief, having himself endured the like. Thou art one with him, and he is one with thee; and as surely as the head feels the pain of the members, so does Jesus share in all the sorrows of his people. Let this be a comfort to thee, thou who art now lying as dead before the risen Lord. He comes near to thee, not to kill thee, but to revive thee by most intimate intercourse, talking with thee as a man speaketh with his friend. O man, greatly beloved, be not so overwhelmed with

the greatness of thy Lord as to forget his love, his great love, his familiar love, which at this moment lays its hand upon thee.

The same action implies *the communication of divine strength.* "He laid his *right* hand upon me." It is the hand of favour, it is also the hand of power. God gives strength to those who have none. He puts power into the faint. When the child of God is brought very low, it is not a mere subject for consideration or theme for reflection that can lift him up: sick men want more than instruction, they require cordials and supports. There must be actual strength and energy imparted to a swooning soul, and, glory be to God, by his own Holy Spirit, Jesus can and does communicate energy to his people in the time of weakness. He is come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. The omnipotence of God is made to rest upon us, so that we even glory in infirmities. "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness," is a blessed promise, which has been fulfilled to the letter to many of us. Our own strength has departed, and then the power of God has flowed in to fill up the vacuum. I cannot explain the process: these are secrets and mysteries to be experienced rather than expounded; but as the coming of the Spirit of God into us first of all makes us live in regeneration, so the renewed coming of the power of God into our soul raises us up from our weakness and our faintness into fresh energy. Be thou encouraged, then, thou fainting spirit today. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. All power belongeth unto the Lord, and he will give it plenteously to those who have none of their own. Be of good courage and wait upon him for none shall be ashamed who make him their confidence.

Then there followed *a word from the Master's own mouth.* He spake and said, "Fear not." Here he applied the remedy to the disease. Christ himself is our medicine, as well as our physician. His voice which stilled the sea, also casts out all our fears. The word of God, as we find it in this book, is very consoling; the word of God, as we hear it from Christ's ministers, has great power in it; but the real and true power of the word lies in Jesus THE WORD. When the truth falls fresh from his own lips, then is it power. Right truly did the Master say, "the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." With what power did those syllables fall on the fluttered heart of John—"Fear not." Oh that we might hear the same voice by the Spirit in our inmost souls.

> "Oh might I hear thine heavenly tongue,
> But whisper '*Thou art mine.*'
> Those gentle words should raise my song
> To notes almost divine."

Truly there are many voices and each has its significance, but the voice of Jesus has a heaven of bliss in its every accent. Let but my beloved speak to me, and I will forego the angelic symphonies. Though he should only say, "Fear not," and not a word beyond, it were worth worlds to see him open his mouth unto us. But you say, can we still hear Jesus speak to us? Ay, by his Spirit. His Spirit still hath fellowship with the hearts of men, and he can bring the word of Scripture right home into the soul, until it becometh no more the letter but the living,

quickening word of Christ. Do you know what I mean by this? If you do not, it is not possible to tell you; and if you do, you will need no explanation. Jesus speaks to the heart, the truth comes not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. O thou troubled believer, thou who art abashed by the very glory thou hast been made to see, be assured that Jesus will draw near unto thy soul, and touch thee, and speak with thee, so that thou shalt be strengthened with might by his Spirit in thine inner man. Had John not fallen as dead, he might never have heard the voice and felt the touch of his Lord. Sweet is the fall which leads to such a rise again.

In order to complete the cure of his servant our Lord went on to give him fuller instruction in that very matter which had overpowered him. Sometimes like cures like. If in a certain sense it is true of divine revelations, that "shallow draughts intoxicate the brain," it is assuredly true that "drinking largely sobers us again." If a glimpse of Christ makes holy men to faint, a clearer sight of him will set them on their feet again. Our Lord went on to instruct John in the glory of his person and power, that his fears might be removed. And truly, brethren, John was in a right state for such celestial instruction; he who is lowly is ready to learn mysteries. He was like wax ready for the seal; or as paper cleansed of all other writing. Because we think we know, we know not; but the death of the pride of knowledge is the birth of true understanding. The Lord loves best for pupils those who lie lowest before him. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." "With the lowly is wisdom." Where Jesus is the teacher, and instructs the heart in the things concerning himself, the soul is made to inherit substance, and its treasures are filled. Blessed are the men who are taught by him who is the wisdom of God, even though while they watch at the posts of his doors they lie as dead men; they are blessed, for they shall find life, and obtain favour of the Lord.

III. We will now advance to the third point of our discourse which contains the pith of it. We have observed the beloved disciple overpowered and we have seen him afterwards revived; now we shall consider for awhile THE SAME DISCIPLE STILL FURTHER INSTRUCTED. Let me have your attention, dear friends, to the glorious truth which is now opening up before us in the text. John was first of all instructed as to *the Lord's person*. "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead." As to the Lord's person, Jesus revealed to his disciple that he was most truly divine. "I am the first and the last." This language can be used of none but God himself; none but he is first; none but he is last; none but God can be first and last. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was evidently first. He existed before he was born into the world. We read, "a body hast thou prepared me." Then Christ was a previously existing one for whom that body was prepared; and he it is who said, "Lo, I come, to do thy will O God." He came into the world, but he had from old eternity dwelt in the bosom of the Father. John the Baptist was born into the world before the Saviour, of whom he was the forerunner, but what does he say? His testimony is "he, coming after me, is preferred before me, for he was before me. He is first in order of honour because first in

order of existence. John was the elder as man, but as God the Lord Jesus is from everlasting. Go back in history as far as you will; with one leap ascend to the days of Moses, and there is Christ before you, for we read: "Let us not tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." There was Christ, then, in the wilderness vexed by the people. He it was whose voice then shook the earth, but who will yet shake not the earth only but also heaven. Go further back to Abraham, and we find the angel of the covenant there. Our Lord expressly says, "Before Abraham was I am." Mark you, not "I was," but "I am;"—he speaks in a God-like manner. Ascend even to the age of Noah, the second parent of our race, and there we discover Jesus Christ preaching to those spirits who are now in prison, who sometime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing." It was Christ in Noah, who by the Spirit preached to the antediluvian sinners. We go further back to the creation of the world, and we find "In the beginning was the word, and the word was God;" and if we fly back to old eternity, before the creating hand commenced its work, we find in Proverbs, the eighth chapter, the witness of the incarnate wisdom himself. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world." Our Lord is thus the first: and so assuredly will he be the last; for all things consist and subsist through the perpetual emanations of his infinite power; and when the kings of the earth shall sleep in the dust, and the powers thereof shall have passed away, when the treasures of time shall have melted, and its most enduring memorials shall have gone like the mists of the morning, he shall be the same, and of his years there shall be no end. Christ is the true Melchisedec, without beginning of days or end of years, "made a priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." This was revealed to John for his comfort, and it stands true to us to-day, and is equally fraught with consolation.

Moreover, by the words "the first and the last" are signified, in most languages, the sum and substance of all things. We say sometimes the top and the bottom of it is so and so; we mean that it is the whole of it. And the Greeks were wont to say, "This is the prow and stern of the business," meaning that it is the whole. And so Jesus Christ, in being first and last, is all in all. And, truly, it is so in the working of redemption and salvation; he begins, carries on, completes; he asks no creature help and will have none. To us he is the author and the finisher of our faith, the alpha of our first comfort, and the omega of our final bliss. We worship Christ as the sum and substance of all good. Herein is wealth of comfort, and, therefore, did the Lord instruct his servant, John, therein. He did as much as say, "John, thou needest no ear, for I am no enemy, no stranger, no avenging spirit, but God himself, in whom thou has learned to put thy trust. Thou believest in God, believe also in me." To every trembling believer we would say, Why dost thou fear? Jesus is

all. Art thou afraid of him, thy brother, thy Saviour, thy friend. Then, what dost thou fear? Anything of old? He is the first. Anything to come? He is the last. Anything in all the world? He is all in all, from the first to the last. What dost thou want? If thou hast him thou hast all. Dost thou need more than all? Hast thou discovered a need within thy spirit, a grievous lack which troubles thee? How can that be when thy Lord Jesus fills all things, and all things are yours in him. If thou hast, indeed, placed thy confidence in him, and made him all thy salvation, to what end and for what cause shouldst thou be troubled with any sort of fear? Having a divine person to be thy protector and thy Saviour, Why shouldst thou be afraid?

In addition, however, to rendering to John the comfort derived from his person, our blessed Master went on to comfort him with the truth of *his self existence.* "I am he that liveth," saith he, "or I am the living one." Creatures are not living in themselves, they borrow leave to be; to God alone it belongs to exist necessarily. He is the *I AM*, and such is Christ. Why then dost thou fear? If the existence of thy Lord, thy Saviour, were precarious and dependent upon some extraneous circumstances, thou wouldst have cause for fear, for thou wouldst be in constant jeopardy. If he had to borrow permission to be, derived strength from creatures, and needed to look hither and thither for strength to sustain his own existence, thou wouldst be ever in danger, and consequently in distress; but, since Jesus cannot possibly cease to be, or be other than he is, or less than he is, what occasion canst thou have for alarm? A self-existent Saviour, and yet a troubled Christian! Oh, let it not be so. "Fear not, I am he that liveth."

And, if these two sources of consolation should not suffice, the Lord in the glory of his tenderness mentions a third—viz., *his atoning death.* He says, "I was dead." The original more correctly rendered is "was made dead." Here we come upon the human nature of our Redeemer. As God and as man he had two natures, but he was not two persons. As one person he ever lives, and yet he was made to die. He came into this world in human form that he might be capable of death; the pure spirit of God could not die, it was not possible that he, the I AM, could be subject to death; but he allied himself with humanity, and in that human form Jesus could die, and did die. In very deed, and truth, and not in semblance; Jesus bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, and they laid his corpse in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Here to the child of God is a fruitful source of consolation. He died, then the atonement is complete; without the shedding of blood there is no remission, but the death of the Son of God brings plenteous pardon. There must be in the death of such a one a sufficient merit to remove guilt and cleanse transgression. Is it not written, "He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood?" Dost thou not hear that song in heaven? Will not its music make thee glad? His own blood hath washed thee; if thou believest in him thou art clean. Look to Calvary, and as thou lookest there and perceivest that he was dead, "fear not."

And then the master declared his *endless life,* "and am alive for evermore." He who offered up the atonement lives again to claim the effect of his sacrifice. He has presented the meritorious sacrifice, and now he has gone to heaven to plead the sacrifice before the throne

of God, and to lay claim to the place which he has prepared for them that love him. Thou hast no dead Saviour to trust to: thou reliest in him who once died—this is comfort to thee, but he lives, the great Redeemer lives. He has risen from the tomb; he has climbed the the hills of heaven; he sits at the right hand of the Father, prepared to defend his people. If thou hadst a Christ in the sepulchre that were sorrow upon sorrow; but thou hast a Christ in heaven, who can die no more. Be thou of good cheer.

And then, to close the whole, the Master said "Amen, and hath the keys of hell and of death." *The mediatorial office* which Christ now occupies is one of great power. He is "God over all, blessed for ever." His dominion is over land and sea, and over heaven and the regions of the dead. There is nothing hid from the energy of his power. He is Lord of all. "He hath the keys of hell and of death." By the word "*hell*" may be meant here the entire invisible land, the whole realm of spirits: Christ is Lord there, adored in heaven and feared in hell. But, if we restrict the sense to the common meaning of the word in our language, he is Lord of hell. The devil despite his malignity can do nothing but what Christ permits him. He is a chained enemy: he may rave and rage, but he cannot injure the child of God. Christ hath him ever in check, and when he permits him to wander abroad, he makes the wrath of man and the wrath of devils to praise him, and the remainder he doth restrain. Why dost thou fear therefore? Thou sayest "I am a sinner—Satan will prevail against me." But Christ saith "I am master of Satan, I am Lord of hell, he cannot prevail against thee." He cannot leave hell unless Christ permits him, for Christ can turn the key and lock him in. He could not take thee there, for Christ has locked thee out and keeps the key. Thou art eternally and perpetually safe from all the machinations of the powers of darkness. And dost thou tremble at *death?* Is it that which alarms thee? Have the pains and groans and dying strifes sounded in thine ear till thou art timid and afraid? Then remember Christ hath the keys of death. Thou canst not die until he permits. If men of blood should seek thy life, they could not smite thee till thy Lord should allow it; and if plagues and death should fly about thee, and thousands die at thy right hand, and ten thousands at thy left, thou canst not die till the Lord wills it. Thou art immortal till he saith "return." The iron gate of death opens not of its own accord to thee, a thousand angels could not drag thee to the tomb; thou comest there only at his call. Fear not, therefore, but remember that death is no longer death to the saints of God, they fall asleep in Jesus. Since thy Lord will be with thee, it will not be death to die; thou shalt find death to thee an enemy muzzled and chained: the wasp shall have lost its sting, it shall be a bee that shall bring thee honey; out of the lion, as Samson did, shalt thou get sweetness to thyself. Death is overcome, and when it arrives, Jesus will come with it, and make thy dying bed most soft to thee.

Remember one thought more. He that hath the key of death will annihilate death; for thy body shall not become the prey of the worm for ever. At the trump of the archangel thy body shall rise again. There shall not a bone or a piece of a bone of one of his people perish,

their very dust is precious in his sight. They sleep awhile, and rest from their labours; but, from beds of dust and silent clay, the Lord of life shall call them all. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Since Jesus who died and ever lives has the keys of death and hell at his girdle, we will not fear to die, let the time appointed be when it may. So that you see there was abundance of comfort for the sinking spirit of the apostle John.

Let me close by saying, in the glory and exaltation of Christ is *the saint's cordial.* Some of us have tried it when our mouths were full of bitterness, and we have rejoiced and been exceeding glad at the thought. A reigning Saviour makes a joyful people. Run there for comfort, ye sons of sorrow: rejoice ye in your king all ye his saints.

But this same glorious Saviour will be *the sinner's terror.* They shall hide their faces at the last from the brightness of his glory; they shall ask the hills and mountains to conceal them from his face who sits upon the throne. A glorious monarch is the rebel's horror. By so much as he whom you have rejected is great and glorious, by so much shall the punishment from his right hand be intolerable. Oh that you were wise enough to cease from fighting with the Almighty Lord.

But, lastly, he is also *the penitent's hope*; for now, to-day, if you would be forgiven, the exalted Saviour presents himself to you most freely. He is exalted on high, but what for? It is to give "repentance and remission of sins." The greater he is the better for those who need great mercy; the more royal and kingly he is the better for humble, broken, bleeding hearts. "Oh, kiss the son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little." From the highest heaven he stretches down the silver sceptre; touch it by a simple faith. May he enable you to do it, and though as yet you fall at his feet as dead, you shall hear him say this morning, "Fear not, I am he that liveth, and was dead, and am alive for evermore, and am, therefore, able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by me, seeing I ever live to make intercession for thee." God bless you, dear friends, by his Spirit. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs viii. 17—36. Revelation i.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A CALL TO HOLY LIVING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 14TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"What do ye more than others?"—Matt. v. 47.

IT is a very great fault in any ministry if the doctrine of justification by faith alone be not most clearly taught. I will go further, and add, that it is not only a great fault, but a fatal one; for souls will never find their way to heaven by a ministry that is indistinct upon the most fundamental of gospel truths. We are justified by faith, and not by the works of the law. The merit by which a soul enters heaven is not its own; it is the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I am quite sure that you will all hold me guiltless of ever having spoken about this great doctrine in any other than unmistakable language; if I have erred, it is not in that direction. At the same time, it is a dangerous state of things if doctrine is made to drive out precept, and faith is held up as making holiness a superfluity. Sanctification must not be forgotten or overlaid by justification. We must teach plainly that the faith which saves the soul is not a dead faith, but a faith which operates with purifying effect upon our entire nature, and produces in us fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. It is not by personal holiness that a man shall enter heaven, but yet without holiness shall no man see the Lord. It is not by good works that we are justified, but if a man shall continue to live an ungodly life, his faith will not justify him; for it is not the faith of God's elect; since that faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit, and conforms men to the image of Christ. We must learn to place the precepts in their right position. They are not the base of the column, but they are the capital of it. Precepts are not given to us as a way to obtain life, but as the way in which to exhibit life. The commands of Christ are not upon the legal tenor of "this do and live," but upon the gospel system of "live and do this." We are not to be attentive to the precepts in order to be saved, but because we are saved. Our master motive is to be gratitude to him who has saved us with a

great salvation. I am sure that every renewed heart here will feel no opposition to the most holy precepts of our Lord. However severely pure that law may seem to be which we have read just now from this fifth chapter of Matthew, our hearts agree with it, and we ask that we may be so renewed that our lives may be conformed to it. The regenerate never rebel against any precept, saying, "This is too pure;" on the contrary, our new-born nature is enamoured of its holiness, and we cry, "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." Even though we find that when we would do good evil is present with us, yet our inmost soul longs after holiness, and pines to be delivered from every evil way. At any rate, dear friends, if it be not so with you, you may well question whether you are indeed the children of God. My desire, this morning, is to insist upon the precepts which tend to holiness, and I pray the Holy Spirit to excite desires after a high degree of purity in all believing hearts.

Too many persons judge themselves by others; and if upon the whole they discover that they are no worse than the mass of mankind, they give themselves a mark of special commendation; they strike a sort of average amongst their neighbours, and if they cannot pretend to be the very best, yet, if they are not the very worst, they are pretty comfortable. There are certain scribes and Pharisees among their acquaintance, who fast thrice in the week, and pay tithes of all they possess, and they look upon those as very superior persons whom they would not attempt to compete with them; but they thank God that they are far above those horrible publicans, and those dreadful sinners, who are put outside the pale of society, and, therefore, they feel quite easy in their minds, and they go to their place of worship as if they were saints, and bear the name of Christian as if it belonged to them; they share in Christian privileges, and sit with God's people, as if they were truly of the family, their marks and evidences being just these, that they do about as much upon the whole as other people, and if they are not first they are not altogether last. The nests of such people ought to be grievously disturbed when they read the chapter before us, for there the Master insists upon a higher standard than the world's highest, and tells us that except our righteousness exceeeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. In our text, the great Master asks of those who are professors of his faith, that they should not only do as much as others to prove their title, but that they should do more than others; and he makes this a test question concerning their being really his followers: "What do ye more than others?"

I shall try, this morning, *first*, to show that there are *grounds for expecting more from Christians than from others; secondly*, I shall try to indicate *the matters in which we naturally expect more from them than from others;* and, *thirdly*, I shall give some *reasons why it should be the aim of every saved soul to do more than others.*

I. We will consider THE GROUNDS FOR EXPECTING MORE FROM CHRISTIANS THAN FROM OTHERS. There are legitimate reasons why the world, the church, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, may expect more from Christians than from the rest of mankind. And, the first is, because

they profess more. Professions should always be supported by facts, or else they are deceits, impostures, and hyprocrisies. A Christian professes himself to be a renewed man; he has learned the evil of sin, repented of it, and fled from it to Christ Jesus; he professes to have been pardoned, and to have received a new heart and a right spirit; he professes, also, to be a child of God, and an heir of heaven. Other men do not profess this. Some, who make no profession, wish that they could hope that these things belonged to them; others of them, altogether, despise these things; but, in neither case, do they profess to be what the Christian is. Now, Christian, if you profess this, your life must prove it, or else, if your life gives the lie to your religious pretensions, you stand convicted of a flagrant falsehood, a fraud on men and a felony against God. It is a high crime and misdemeanor for a man to assume the name of a son of God, when he is utterly devoid of the divine nature, and lives in unholiness. In proportion as the privilege and the honour of a child of God is great, the sin of false pretensions to grace is increased. If you say you are regenerated, renewed, and sanctified, then be all that this means, or else cease your boasting. Vainly do they boast of scholarship who cannot read a letter, and idle is that vaunting of valour which leaves a man afraid of his shadow. You remember the ancient story of the traveller who, upon his return to his native city, boasted of the extraordinary feats which he had performed, and how, in particular, he had astonished all by his amazing leaps. I forget how many paces he had cleared, but something very wonderful indeed. Those who stood round opened their months in amazement, as they heard the marvel, but one sage was less believing, and, therefore, marked out the exact length on the ground, and said, "If you leaped as far as that abroad, perhaps you will do the same here, and then we will believe you." The world, in these times, will be sure to ask for proofs; the age for mere assertion is over. Men will say to you, you claim to have experienced this, and to be that; now, just act accordingly and we will believe you; and, if you do not give them a fair and honest reply, they will not mutter it in secret places, but they will make it plain to your face that they believe you to be a mere pretender; and, what is worse, they will blame the Christian religion of which you are so unworthy a professor. Alas! we may well blush for many of you professors. How might you blush for yourselves if you were capable of it; but it is to be feared that many are past shame and have brazen foreheads. How has Christ been dishonoured, crucified afresh, and put to an open shame by ungodly men who have dared to take his name upon themselves. When one of the great painters was engaged upon the portraits of Peter and Paul, a cardinal who stood by observed that he thought the painter put too much red into their faces. "No," said the artist, "it is to show how much the apostles blush for the conduct of those who call themselves their successors." Ye professors are the successors of the early saints, but do you not dishonour their names? In how many cases may your pastors blush for you, and weep over you, because you cause the holy name to be blasphemed. We have all much cause for heart-searching here, but the misery is that the very men who have most cause to be anxious will refuse to search themselves.

Instead of doing more than others, it is to be feared that many are not doing as much as others. Even worldly men are more honest than some professors, and I might add more generous and more sober. There are thousands who do not profess to be converted, who, nevertheless, are scrupulous in their dealings and exact in their mercantile transactions, while some base-born professors have fleeced the public, have issued lying prospectuses of bubble companies, and have ended in gigantic bankruptcies: if we have much of this, religion will be a scoff and a by-word throughout the land. God save us from making a profession if we have not grace to live up to it.

But, secondly, we may well expect more from Christians than others, because it is a fact in the case of those who are truly Christians that *they are more than others.* It is not mere talk, it is a fact that the believer in Christ is born again. He is not only as other men are, made by God, but he has been twice made, new born, new created in Christ Jesus. It is no fiction but a matter of truthful experience; we have passed from death unto life. We have received the Spirit of God into our souls, which has implanted in us a new nature higher than the nature of other men, as much higher than the common soul of man as the soul of man is above the nature of the beast; for the children of God are partakers of the divine nature, God dwelleth in them, and the Spirit of God inhabits them as a king inhabits his palace. They are more than other men. They are so not only because of their regeneration, but because of that eternal act of God which set them apart in the covenant of grace or ever the earth was. God has a chosen people. "I have chosen you out of the world," saith Christ. There are some upon whom everlasting love fixed its eye of grace or ever the mountains pierced the clouds or the rivers sought the sea. These are more than others, and are infinitely more indebted to God's love than others. He hath loved them with an everlasting love, and because of this he has drawn them to himself. These men, because chosen of God, have been redeemed as other men were not. There is a sense in which the atonement of Christ reaches to all mankind; but, undoubtedly, Scripture teaches us that there is a people whom Christ has "redeemed from among men." "He laid down his life for his sheep:" "he loved his church, and gave himself *for it.*" There is a particular redemption, and in this every truly regenerated child of God is most certainly a partaker. Upon him is the blood mark, and he is Christ's. Of all such, it may be said, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." They have God's nature in them, they have God's election upon them, they have God's redemption emancipating them, so that they are more than others. They are precious sons of God while others are heirs of wrath; they are in the light while the whole world lieth in darkness; they are sheep of his pasture while the rest of the world roam upon the wild mountains of vanity. Now, if they are more than others they ought to produce more than others in their lives. I will not insist upon the reasoning here, because I rather appeal to every believer's heart than to his head. According as ye have received so will love suggest to you to render. Can any holiness be too precise in return for the infinite love which has been bestowed upon you from before the foundation of the world? Can any service be too hard to

repay the suffering which your Saviour bore for your redemption? Can any self-denial be too severe to prove that the Holy Ghost in you has subdued your flesh and overcome your corruptions? I say the argument appeals to your love: I will not utter it in legal tones lest you should think you hear the whip of the law behind me; but even the Master himself I think would put it to you thus, "Inasmuch as I have loved you thus, and have redeemed you with such a price, and have begotten you unto myself by the power of my Spirit, what manner of people ought ye to be in all holy conversation?" What must be expected from those so signally distinguished by the sovereign grace of God?

Again, it is certain that true Christians *can do more than others.* "Can," saith one, "why, they can do nothing." True, but through Christ that strengtheneth them they can do all things; and Christ does strengthen his people. I admit their weakness, I admit, nay, I mourn and experimentally lament, in my own person, their feebleness; but, for all that, they are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Jesus Christ lends to them his conquering energy, and, as his blood has overcome the enemy, they overcome through the blood of the Lamb. God has given them his Son, and in the power of Jesus they can and must vanquish sin.

Moreover, what is the indwelling Spirit within us? Is he not Omnipotence itself? The Holy Ghost who has come upon us is no influence which might be limited in its efficacy; but he is a divine person, who dwelleth with us and shall be in us. Who shall set any limit to the power of that man in whom the Holy Ghost himself dwells? As believers, we must never dare to say, "That habit we cannot give up." We can and must overturn all the idols in our hearts. We may never say, "That height of devotion I can never reach." Brethren, Omnipotence doth gird us; God giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are never to sit down and say, "I must be a sinner up to such-and-such a point; I cannot get beyond that attainment." What saith the Scripture? "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" after this perfection we are to strain, and towards this mark of our high calling we are to press. God who dwells in us is working in us daily to will and to do according to his own good pleasure, so that we can do what the dead sinner cannot do; we can do what sinners, without the Spirit, cannot do; and, if we can, we must. Surely, it is required of a man according to what he hath, and where much is given much will be required. Let us take care that we quench not the Spirit, that by our unbelief we restrain not his divine energies; but let us strive, God striving in us, after the highest conceivable standard of holiness and of separation from the world. O Spirit of God, do thou help us that we may be sanctified by thy grace, spirit, soul, and body.

Yet further, more is to be expected of Christians than others, because *they have more.* "But they are poor," saith one. True, but the poorest Christian possesses more than the richest unbeliever. You shall set before me now the pauper who is a believer, and the emperor who has no faith in Christ, and I am persuaded that the poor, aged pauper would not exchange her lot though the imperial purple should be

offered her. She would refuse to leave her Saviour though the world were offered her. Methinks she would quote Dr. Watts, and say—

"Go you that boast in all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine;
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
But my Redeemer's mine."

While the poor believer feels that his God is his portion he dispises rather than covets the glories of the world.

Brethren in Christ, you know right well that you possess the covenant of grace, a covenant rich beyond comparison. When Moses looked from the top of Nebo and saw the land from Lebanon even to the river of Egypt, no such prospect gladdened his gaze as that which rises before the eye of your faith when you survey the covenant ordered in all things and sure. More than that, you have Christ in the covenant, and Christ is all. All the glories of his immaculate manhood and his infinite Godhead, and all his merits, and all his conquests, and all his glories, all are yours, seeing you are his. And what is most of all, God is yours. "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." And having God to be your God, Providence is yours—all things work together for your good. Life's goods are yours and so are its ills; this world is yours and worlds beyond the river; time and eternity, things present and things to come, life and death, all are yours. And yet no good thing was yours by natural inheritance. No good was yours by purchase from your own earnings or procurement of your own labour; they are all the gifts of the sovereign grace of God. Brethren, we are debtors: who shall tell how much we owe? If I said to any of you, "Take thy pen and sit down quickly, and write how much thou owest to thy Lord," if you had to sit there till you completed the wondrous tale, you certainly would never leave those seats. Depths of mercy, that I, a sinner, should ever have a hope of heaven; but oh, heights of mercy! that I should be adopted into the family of God, and made a joint heir with Christ Jesus of all the heritage of the Firstborn of God; to have all that God is, and all that God has, to be the portion of my cup, this is grace indeed! My cup runneth over! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

And now, after all this, ought you not to do more than others? Shall the servant who has but his daily pay love the master better than the child who has the father's heart? Shall the stranger who comes into the house occasionally love the master of the house better than his spouse who is beloved of his soul? Oh, by the favours you have received, countless and immense; by the precious fountain-head of mercy, from which all those favours come; by the many years in which goodness and mercy have followed you all your days; if you be not indeed insensible, and your hearts changed to adamant, I beseech you, brethren, do more than others; serve your Lord with an intensity which others cannot reach, and live for him with an ardour of which they cannot conceive. I think there is a good argument here. It will be powerful reasoning, if you feel it to be so. Do you feel it, brother? And feeling it, will you try to live it out?

Believers ought to do more than others, in the next place, because *they are looking for more than others.* The ungodly man's look-out is dark and dreary: when he dares open the window and look, what seeth he? Come hither, come hither, ungodly man, I must take thee to the battlements of thine house and bid thee look abroad. What seest thou? Ah, he closes his eye and refuses to look, for he sees a river, the name of which is Death, and he seeth that the waves are black and foaming with the wrath of God. Look, sir, look, I pray you, for to close your eyes upon it will not dry it up. And see you what is beyond that river? Ah, he dares not think, for after death to him cometh hell and the wrath of God. O man, look, I beseech thee, look, for it will be thy portion except thou repent and fly to Christ for mercy. But no, he covers his eyes, and gets him back to his gaieties, for he cannot bear to look at what will surely be his portion. But come, thou Christian, thou who hast washed thy robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; what seest thou? Suppose it should be thy lot to die before the Master comes in the Second Advent, what seest thou? "I see," saith he, "but a couch whereon I recline and close mine eyes on earth to open them in heaven; I see angels waiting round that bed, and the Master, the Lord of life, ready to receive my spirit." "What next do you see?" "Nay, I cannot tell you, for my eyes are dazzled with the glory, and my tongue is not able to describe what God revealeth to his children by his Spirit; but there is the never-ending glory, for ever with the Lord, the rest that knows no fear, the Sabbath without end." Oh, the glory, the glory that lasteth on for aye in the presence of the Master whom we have served, and the Father who hath loved us of old! This is your prospect now; and brethren, as your prospect is so bright, I beseech you do ye more than others.

II. This is a very large field, but we must leave it because our time fails us, and we must call your attention to those MATTERS IN WHICH WE MAY NATURALLY LOOK FOR THE CHRISTIAN TO DO MORE THAN OTHERS.

I thought I would not utter my own ideas this morning, but to fortify myself, would go back to the Master's own language; so I must refer you again to this fifth chapter of Matthew, and you will see in looking from the thirteenth to the sixteenth verses, that our Lord expects his people *to set a more godly example* than others do. Observe, they are to be the salt of the earth, they are to be the light of the world, they are to be as a city set on a hill, and therefore seen of all. If you were not a professor, my friend, you would certainly have some influence, and be under responsibilities for it; but as a Christian, your place in this world is peculiarly that of influence. You are not like a stone, affected by the atmosphere, or overgrown by moss, a merely passive thing; no, you are active, and are to affect others, as the salt which operates and seasons. You are not a candle unlit, which can exist without affecting others; you are a lighted candle, and you cannot be so lit without scattering light around. You are made on purpose to exert influence, and your Master warns you that if your influence be not salutary and good you are a hopelessly useless person; for when the salt has lost its savour it is good for nothing but to be trampled under foot. You are expected, therefore, to influence others for good.

You are an employer; let your influence be felt by your servants. You are a child at home; let your influence be felt around the social hearth. You are, perhaps, a domestic servant; then take care that, like the little maid who waited on Naaman's wife, you seek the good of the household. Your influence must act quietly and unostentatiously, like the influence of salt, which is not noisy but yet potent. You cannot get through this world rightly by saying, "If I do no good, at least, I do no hurt;" that might be the plea of a stone or a brick, but it cannot be an apology for savourless salt; for if when the salt is rubbed into the meat it does not season and preserve it, it is bad salt, and has not performed its work, but has caused loss to the owner, and left the meat to become putrid. And if you in this world, according to your capacity and means, do not affect other people for good, you have convicted yourself of being useless, worthless, a cumberer of the ground. The Master expects, as he has put the pungent influence of his grace into you, that you should be as salt; as he has put the burning light of his grace upon you, that you should be as a lamp, and scatter light all round. Take good heed of that. It is no saying of mine, it is the saying of him whom ye call Master and Lord. Think you hear him speaking it from those dear lips, which are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh, and instead of seeing my hands lifted up in warning, think you see the print of the nails in his hand, and let the words come home with force to your soul.

Next, if I read from the seventeenth to the twentieth verse, I am taught that our Lord expects from his people *a more exact performance of the divine will* than even the Pharisees pretend to give. Observe, he speaks here about jots and tittles never passing away, and about those who break the least of his commandments, and teach men so; and I gather that he would have us observe the very least of his words and treasure up his commandments. Do you think, dear brethren, there would be so many sects among Christians if all believers honestly wanted to know the truth and to know Christ's will? I do not think there would be. I cannot think our Lord has written a book so doubtful and ambiguous in its expressions that men need differ in interpreting it upon plain points. I am afraid we bring prejudice to it, the prejudice of our constitutional temperament, or of our parents, or of the church with which we are associated, and we pay reverence to somebody else's book, perhaps a catechism, perhaps the Book of Common Prayer, over and beyond the Bible itself. Now, this is all wrong, and we must purge ourselves of it and come to the word of God itself: and, when we come to this book, it must be candidly and humbly, with this feeling, "I desire now to unlearn the most precious doctrine or practice I have ever learned if the Lord will show me that it is inconsistent with his will; and I desire to learn that truth which will bring me most into derision, or that ordinance which will submit me to the greatest inconvenience, if it is his will, for I am his servant, and I desire nothing to support my own opinion, or to be my own rule." I think we shall all get pretty near together, if, in the Spirit of God, we begin reading our Bibles in this way. Surely the Lord expects this of us. I do not think he expects this of some professors, for certainly he will never get it; they are quite satisfied to say, "I attend my parish church, and that is the faith of our church;"

or, "My grandmother joined the Dissenters, and, therefore, I keep to to them; and besides, after all, you know there are no sects in heaven." That last assertion is one of the most shallow pretences ever designed on earth, to excuse men from being scrupulously obedient to every word of their Lord and Master. I do not doubt, O disciple, but what you will reach heaven, even though you mistake some of the Master's teaching, but I do doubt your ever reaching there if you wilfully despise his words, or decline to learn what he came to teach. Our Lord has said unto us, "Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and therefore, if you will not become disciples, and learn of Christ, we have not even begun with you, neither can you be baptised, or bear the name of the Triune God. Jesus will have you obey his will, as well as trust his grace. Mind that, beloved. This demand for exact obedience is no word of mine, but of the Master.

Look again, from the twenty-first to the twenty-sixth verse, and though I do not pretend to expound every word, I remark that Christ would have his people excel all others *in gentleness*. Others will retaliate on those who vex them, and call them hard names, and will even go the length of saying "fool;" and, perhaps, go still further, and even come to cursing and imprecating terrible judgments. A quarrelsome man when he is in a quarrel with another rather takes pleasure in it; he does not mind how many hate him, or how many he hates; his religion is quite consistent with the worst temper; he can say his prayers, or he can offer his gifts to his God, and yet be as malicious as he likes; but with the Christian it is not so, and must not be so. We are to bear a great deal of wrong before we make any reply whatever, and when we do give an answer, we must, if we would be like our Master, give a gentle one. Heaping coals of fire upon the head of our enemy by returning abundant kindness is the right revenge for a Christian, and all other revenge is denied to him. He is not to stand upon his rights; he is rather to say, "I know it is my right, but I will yield it sooner than I will contend; I know this man does me an injustice, but I will bear it sooner than my temper shall be ruffled, or my spirit shall be defiled, by a thought of evil." "Oh," saith one, "this is a hard measure." Do you think it so? Are you a Christian then? for while in my soul I feel it is difficult, my heart feels I desire to do it, and I love it, and aspire after it; and I think every real Christian, though by reason of infirmity he often breaks this blessed rule, yet sees the beauty of it, and does not think it hard. Nay, rather the hard point to him is that he should fall so short of the gentle, loving nature of his dear Lord and Master.

But, I must pass on, for the next point in which the Christian is to excel is *in purity*. Read from the twenty-seventh to the thirty-second verse—I do not go into particulars, but purity is earnestly commanded. The ungodly man says, "Well, I do not commit any act of fornication; you do not hear me sing a lascivious song," and saying that he feels content: but the Christian's Master expects us to carry the point a great deal farther. An unchaste look is a crime to us, and an evil thought is a sin. Oh, it shocks me beyond measure when I hear of professedly Christian people who fall into the commission of immodest actions,—not such as are called criminal in common society,

but loose, fleshly, and full of lasciviousness. I beseech you all of you in your conversation with one other, avoid anything which has the appearance of impurity in this respect. Looks and gestures step by step lead on to fouler things, and sport which begins in folly ends in lewdness. Be ye chaste as the driven snow, let not an immodest glance defile you. We do not like to say much about these things, they are so delicate, and we tremble lest we should suggest what we would prevent; but, oh, by the tears of Jesus, by the wounds of Jesus, by the death of Jesus, hate even the garment spotted by the flesh; and avoid everything that savours of unchastity. Flee youthful lusts as Joseph did. Run any risk sooner than fall into uncleanness, for it is a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein. Strong temptation lie in wait for the young in a great city like this, but let the young man learn of God to cleanse his way, by taking heed thereto according to his word. May you all be kept from falling, and be presented faultless before the presence of God with exceeding great joy. You are not to be commonly chaste, you are to be much more than that: the very look and thought of impurity are to be hateful to you. Help us, O Spirit of God.

Next to that, the Christian is to be more than others *in truthfulness*. Read on from the thirty-third to the thirty-seventh verse, and the gist of all is, that whereas another man utters the truth because he swears, you are to speak the truth because you can do no otherwise. Your ordinary word is to be as true as the extraordinary oath of the man who stands in the witness box in the court of justice. You are to avoid those evasions, those modes of concealing truth which are common enough in trade, those exaggerations, those lies which are a common nuisance. Why, our advertisements swarm with lies; our shop windows are daubed with them—such as "tremendous sacrifices," when the only sacrificed person is the customer. All the world sees through puffery, and yet even professors go on puffing and exaggerating. Shun it, Christian. If you tell a man you sell him an article under cost price, let it be under cost price, or do not say so. There are other modes of commending your wares which will be quite as effectual as falsehood. Scorn to earn a farthing by uttering that which is not true, and what you might allow in your next door neighbour, and say, "Well, he is under a different rule from me;" do not for a moment tolerate in yourself. The strict literal truth in all things should be the law of the child of God. Let your "yea, be yea," and your "nay, nay."

We have already touched upon the point which our Saviour mentions from the thirty-eighth to the forty-second verse, namely, that the Christian should excel *in forbearance*. He should be ready to suffer wrong again and again sooner than be provoked to resistance, much less retaliation. That I have already spoken of, but may we excel in it.

And lastly, from the forty-second to the forty-eighth verse, our Saviour shows that he expects us to excel *in love to all mankind*, and in the practical fruit of it, in trying to do them good. We ought to be, above all others, the most loving people, and the most good-doing people. Your man who buttons himself up within himself, and says, "Well, let every man see to himself, that is what I say; every man for himself and God for us all;" the man who goes through the world paying his way

with strict justice, but all the while having no heart to feel for the sick, and the poor, and the needy, with no care about anybody else's soul, his whole heart enclosed within his own ribs, all buttoned up in his own broadcloth such; a man is very like the devil, but he certainly is not like Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ's heart was expansive and unselfish. He gave himself for his enemies, and died breathing a prayer over them; he lived never for himself. You could not put your finger on one point of his life and say, "here he lived for himself alone." Neither his prayers nor his preachings, his miracles or his sufferings, his woes or his glories were with an eye to himself. He saved others, but himself he would not save. His followers must in this follow him closely. Selfishness is as foreign to Christianity as darkness to light. The true Christian lives to do good, he looks abroad to see whom he may serve, and with this eye he looks upon the wicked, upon the fallen and the offcasts, seeking to reclaim them. Yes, in the same way he looks upon his personal enemies, and aims at winning them by repeated kindnesses. No nationality must confine his goodwill, no sect or clan monopolise his benevolence. No depravity of character or poverty of condition must sicken his loving-kindness, for Jesus received sinners and ate with them. Our love must embrace those who lie hard by the gates of hell, and we must endeavour with words of truth and deeds of love to bring them to Christ, who can uplift them to heaven. Oh that you may all be gentle, quiet, meek in spirit, but full of an ardent, burning affection towards your fellowmen; so shall you be known to be Christ's disciples.

"Oh," say you, "these are great things." Yes, but you have a great Spirit to help you, and you owe a great deal to your precious Lord and Master. Did I hear one say, "I will avoid sin by being very retired; I will find out a quiet place where I shall not be tempted, and where I shall have few calls upon me." Pretty soldier you who when your Captain says, "Win the victory," reply, "I will keep clear of the fight." No, Christian, go about your trade, go into the busy mart, attend to your business, attend to your family, attend to those matters which God has allotted to you, and glorify God in the battle of life by doing more than others. May God enable you so to do.

III. Now, into about two minutes we must condense what ought to have occupied at least a quarter-of-an-hour. The last head was to deal with REASONS FOR OUR DOING MORE THAN OTHERS. They were just these. First, *by our fruits we are to be known.* Men will never know us by our faith, for that is within us; they know us by our works, which are visible to them. Bring forth, therefore, the fruits of grace, that the world may know you have been with Jesus. Remember also that *works are to be evidence at the last.* It is consistent with the gospel of grace, no doubt, for it is a truth clearly revealed, that we shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil; and you know that when the Lord gives us the description of the judgment, he did not say to his disciples, "Ye believed in me," or "Ye loved me"—these were secret matters—but he said, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me." It is by

your works ye will be judged. O believers, may grace enable you to abound in them.

It is by such works that the mouths of gainsayers are to be stopped. One holy action is a better argument against blasphemers than a thousand eloquent discourses. You are our replies to sceptics—you who having been rescued from sin maintain a life of holiness. When they see the men that are healed, standing with Peter and John, they can say nothing against them. Oh, by your works confound gainsayers!

These works, too, *bring glory to God.* "That they, seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

And these works also ensure peace to your own conscience, and have much to do with your close communion with God. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" If ye walk contrary to him he will walk contrary to you. Your sins will separate between you and your God, but the Holy Spirit, where he maintains holiness, maintains peace and communion in the soul. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "If ye keep my commandments," saith the Saviour, "Ye shall abide in my love"—shall abide in the conscious fellowship of that love, and in the enjoyment of it. May God help you, may God help you, for his name's sake.

Look ye here, ye who say you believe in Christ and are living in sin: what does this make of your boastings? Look you here, ye that say "I have only to believe by-and-by, and I may live as I like, and yet be saved." Is it so? Is it so? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where will the ungodly and the wicked appear?" As for those whose ungodly lives stare them in the face, so far from being saved by their pretended faith, they are trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots. If they say they continue in sin that grace may abound, their damnation is just. The salvation of Christ is not a salvation *in* sin, but a salvation *from* sin. They who would be saved by him must come and trust him just as they are, and he will enable them to forsake their sin; but while they continue to say, "We will take pleasure in sin," there is no salvation possible for them. God bring us to Christ, and nail our sins to his cross, and give us life in our Saviour's life. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Matthew v.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PILGRIM'S LONGINGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."—Hebrews xi. 15, 16.

ABRAHAM left his country at God's command, and he never went back again. The proof of faith lies in perseverance. There is a sort of faith which does run well, but it is soon hindered, and it doth not obey the truth. That is not the faith to which the promise is given. The faith of God's elect continues and abides. Being connected with the living and incorruptible seed, it lives and abides for ever. Abraham returned not; Isaac returned not; Jacob returned not. The promise was to them as "strangers and sojourners," and so they continued. The apostle tells us, however, that they were not forced so to continue; they did not remain because they *could not* return. Had they been mindful of the place from whence they came out, they might have found opportunities to go back. Frequent opportunities came in their way; there was communication kept up between them and the old family-house at Padan-Aram: they had news sometimes from the old quarters. More than that, there were messages exchanged, servants were sometimes sent, and you know there was a new relation entered into—did not Rebekah come from thence? And Jacob, one of the patriarchs, was driven to go down into the land, but he could not stay there; he was always unrestful, till at last he stole a march upon Laban and came back into the proper life—the life which he had chosen, the life which God had commanded him, the life of a pilgrim and a stranger in the land of promise. You see, then, they had many opportunities to have returned, to have settled comfortably, and tilled the ground as their fathers did before them; but they continued to follow the uncomfortable shifting life of wanderers of the weary foot, who dwelt in tents, who own no foot of land—they were aliens in the country which God had given them by promise.

Now, our position is very similar to theirs. As many of us as have believed in Christ have been called out. The very meaning of a church is, "called out by Christ." We have been separated. I trust we know what it is to have gone without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach. Henceforth, in this world we have no home, no true home for our spirits; our home is beyond the flood; we are looking for it amongst the unseen things; we are strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were, dwellers in this wilderness, passing through it to reach the Canaan which is to be the land of our perpetual inheritance.

I. I propose, then, first of all this evening, to speak to you upon the opportunities which we have had, and still have, to return to the old house, if we were mindful of it. Indeed, it seems to me as if the word "opportunity," as it occurs in the text, were hardly strong enough to express the influence and incentive, the provocations and solicitations, by which, in our case, we have been urged. It is a wonder of wonders that we have not gone back to the world, with its sinful pleasures and its idolatrous customs. When I think of the strength of divine grace, I do not marvel that saints should persevere; but, when I remember the weakness of their nature, it seems a miracle of miracles that there should be one Christian in the world who could maintain his steadfastness for a single hour. It is nothing short of Godhead's utmost stretch of might that keeps the feet of the saints, and preserves them from going back to their old unregenerate condition. We have had opportunities to have returned. My brethren, we have such opportunities in our daily calling. Some of you are engaged in the midst of ungodly men, and those engagements supply you with constant opportunities to sin as they do, to fall into their excesses, to lapse into their forgetfulness of God, or even to take part in their blasphemies. Oh, have you not often strong inducements, if it were not for the grace of God, to become as they are? Or, if your occupation keeps you alone, yet, my brethren, there is one who is pretty sure to intrude upon our privacy, to corrupt our thoughts, to kindle strange desires in our breasts, to tantalise us with morbid fancies, and to seek our mischief. The Tempter he is, the Destroyer he would be, if we were not delivered from his snares. Ah, how frequently will solitude have temptations as severe as publicity could possibly bring. There are perils in company, but there are perils likewise in our loneliness. We have many opportunities to return. In the parlour, pleasantly conversing, or in the kitchen, perhaps, occupied with the day's work—toiling in the field, or trading on the mart, busy on the land or tossed about on the sea, there are critical seasons on which destiny itself might appear to hang contingent. Where can we fly to escape from these opportunities that haunt us everywhere and peril us in every thing? If we should mount upon the wings of the wind, could we find "a lodge in some vast wilderness," think ye, then, we might be quite clear from all the opportunities to go back to the old sins in which we once indulged? No. Each man's calling may seem to him to be more full of temptation than his fellow's. It is not so. Our temptations are pretty equally distributed, I dare say, after all, and all of us might say, that we find in our avocations, from hour to hour, many opportunities to return.

But, dear brethren, it is not merely in our business and in our

calling; the mischief lies in our bone and in our flesh. Opportunities to return! Ah! Who that knows himself does not find strong incentives to return. Ah! how often will our imagination paint sin in very glowing colours, and, though we loathe sin and loathe ourselves for thinking of it, yet how many a man might say, "had it not been for divine grace, where should I have been?—for my feet had almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped." How strong is the evil in the most upright man! How stern is the conflict to keep under the body, lest corruption should prevail. You may be diligent in secret prayer, and, perhaps, the devil may have seemed asleep till you began to pray, and when you were most fervent, then will he also become most rampant. When you get nearer to God, Satan will sometimes seem to get nearer to you. Opportunities to return, as long as you are in this body, will be with you. To the very edge of Jordan you will meet with temptations. When you sit expectant on the banks of the last river, waiting for the summons to cross, it may be that your fiercest temptation will come even then. Oh, this flesh, the body of this death —wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from it? But while it continues with me, I shall find opportunities to return.

So too, dear brethren and sisters, these opportunities to return are adapted to our circumstances and adjusted to any condition of life, and any change through which we may pass. For instance, how often have professors, when they have prospered, found opportunities to return! I sigh to think of many that appeared to be very earnest Christians when they were struggling for bread, who have become very dull and cold now that they have grown rich and increased in goods. How often does it happen in this land of ours, that a poor earnest Christian has associated with the people of God at all meetings, and felt proud to be there, but he has risen in the world and stood an inch or two above others in common esteem, and he could not go with God's people any longer: he must seek out the world's church and join in to get a share of the respectability and prestige that will always congregate in the domain of fashion. Henceforth, the man has turned aside from the faith, if not altogether in his heart, at least in his life. Beware of the high places: they are very slippery. There is not all the enjoyment you may think to be gathered in retirement and in ease. On the contrary, luxury often puffeth up, and abundance makes the heart to swell with vanity. If any of you are prospering in this world, oh watch, for you are in imminent danger of being mindful to return to the place whence you came out.

But, the peril is as instant every whit in adversity. Alas, I have had to mourn over Christian men—at least I thought they were such—who have waxed very poor, and when they have grown poor, they hardly felt they could associate with those they knew in better circumstances. I think they were mistaken in the notion that they would be despised. I should be ashamed of the Christian who would despise his fellow, because God was dealing with him somewhat severely in Providence. Yet there is a feeling in the human heart, and, though there may be no unkind treatment, yet, oftentimes, the sensitive spirit is apt to imagine it, and I have observed some absent themselves by degrees from the assembly of God with a sense of shame. It is smoothing the way to return to

your old place; and, indeed, I have not wondered when I have seen some professors grow cold, when I have thought where they were compelled to live, and how they have been constrained to pass their time. Perhaps they were living at home before, but now they have to take a room where they can have no quiet, but where sounds of blasphemy greet them, or, in some cases, where they have to go to the workhouse, and be far away from all Christian intercourse or anything that could comfort them. It is only God's grace that can keep your graces alive under such circumstances. You see, whether you grow rich or whether you grow poor, you will have these opportunities to return. If you want to go back to sin, to carnality, to a love of the world, to your old condition, you never need to be prevented from doing so by want of opportunities: it will be something else that will prevent you, for these opportunities are plentiful and countless.

Opportunities to return! Let me say just one thing more about them. They are often furnished by the example of others.

> "When any turn from Zion's way,
> Alas, what numbers do!
> Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
> Wilt thou forsake me too?"

The departures from the faith of those whom we highly esteem are, at least while we are young, very severe trials to us. We keenly suspect whether that religion can be true which was feigned so cunningly and betrayed so wantonly, by one who seemed to be a model, but proved to be a hypocrite. It staggers us: we cannot make it out. Opportunities to return you have now; but ah! may grace be given you so that, if others play the Judas, instead of leading you to do the same, it may only bind you more fast to your Lord, and make you walk more carefully, lest you also prove a son of perdition.

And ah, my brethren and sisters, if some of us were to return, we should have this opportunity—a cordial welcome from our former comrades. None of our old friends would refuse to receive us. There is many a Christian who, if he were to go back to the gaiety of the world, would find the world await him with open arms. He was the favourite of the ball-room once; he was the wit "that set the table in a roar;" he was the man who above all was courted when he moved in the circles of the vain and frivolous: glad enough would they be to see him come back. What a shout of triumph would they raise, and how would they fraternise with him! Oh, may the day never come to you, you young people especially, who have lately put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and professed his name, when you shall be welcomed by the world, but may you for ever forget your kindred and your father's house, so shall the king greatly desire your beauty, for he is the Lord, and worship you him. Separation from the world will endear you to the Saviour, and bring you into conscious enjoyment of his presence; but, of opportunities to return there is no lack.

Perhaps, you will say, "Why does the Lord make them so plentiful? Could he not have kept us from temptation?" There is no doubt he could, but it was never the Master's intention that we should all be hothouse plants. He taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation,"

but, at the same time, he does lead us there, and intends to do it, and this for the proving of our faith, to see whether it be true faith or not. Depend upon it, faith that is never tried is not true faith. It must be sooner or later exercised. God does not create useless things: he intends that the faith he gives should have its test, should glorify his name. These opportunities to return are meant to try your faith, and they are sent to you to prove that you are a volunteer soldier. Why, if grace was a sort of chain that manacled you, so that you could not leave your Lord; if it had become a physical impossibility to forsake the Saviour, there would be no credit in it. He that does not run away because his legs are too weak, does not prove himself a hero; but he that could run, but will not run; he that could desert his Lord, but will not desert him, has within him a principle of grace stronger than any fetter could be—the highest, firmest, noblest bond that unites a man to the Saviour. By this shall you know whether you are Christ's or not. When you have opportunity to return, if you do not return, that shall prove you are his. Two men are going along a road, and there is a dog behind them. I do not know to which of them that dog belongs, but I shall be able to tell you directly. They are coming to a cross-road: one goes to the right, the other goes to the left. Now which man does the dog follow? That is his master. So when Christ and the world go together, you cannot tell which you are following; but, when there is a separation, and Christ goes one way, and your interest and your pleasure seem to go the other way, if you can part with the world and keep with Christ, then you are one of his. After this manner these opportunities to return may serve us a good purpose: they prove our faith, while they try our character; thus helping us to see whether we are indeed the Lord's or not.

But, we must pass on (for we have a very wealthy text) to notice the second point.

II. We cannot take any opportunity to go back, because we desire something better than we could get by returning to that country from whence we came out. An insatiable desire has been implanted in us by divine grace which urges us to—

> "Forget the steps already trod,
> And onward press our way."

Notice how the text puts it:—"But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Brethren, you desire something better than this world, do you not? Has the world ever satisfied you? Perhaps it did when you were dead in sin. A dead world may satisfy a dead heart; but ever since you have known something of better things, and brighter realities, have you been ever contented with earthly things and empty vanities? Perhaps you have tried to fill your soul with the daintiest provisions the world can offer; to wit—God has prospered you, and you have said, "Oh, this is well." Your children have been about you, you have had many household joys, and you have said, "I could stay here for ever." Did not you find very soon that there was a thorn in the flesh? Did you ever gather a rose in this world that was altogether without a thorn? Have you not been obliged to say, after you have had all that the world could give you, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity?"

I am sure it has been so with me, with you, with all my kinsfolk in Christ, and with all my yokefellows in his service. All God's saints would confess that were the Lord to say to them, "You shall have all the world, and that shall be your portion," they would be broken-hearted men. "Nay, my Lord," they would reply, "do not put me off with these trifling presents; feed me not upon these husks. Though thou shouldst give me Joseph's lot, the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey;" yea, though thou shouldst confer on me the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof, I would prefer before them all the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush. Give me thyself, and take these all away, if so it please thee, but do not, my Lord, do not think I can be content with Egypt since I have set forth for Canaan, or that I can settle down in the wilderness now that I am journeying to the land of promise. We desire something better.

There is this about a Christian that, even when he does not *enjoy* something better, he *desires* it; of that, verily, I am quite sure. How much of character is revealed in our desires. I felt greatly encouraged when I read this, "Now they desire a better"—The word "country" has been inserted by our translators. It weakens the sense; vague but vast is the craving expressed in the sentence, "They desire a better"—I know I long for something far better, something infinitely preferable to that which my eyes can see or that my tongue can express. I do not always enjoy that something better. Dark is my path; I cannot see my Lord; I cannot enjoy his presence; sometimes I am like one that is banished from him; but I *desire* his blessing, I *desire* his presence; and, though to desire may be but a little thing, let me say a good desire is more than nature ever grew: grace has given it. It is a great thing to be desirous. "They desire a better country." And, because we desire this better thing, we cannot go back and be content with things which gratified us once.

More than that, if ever the child of God gets entangled for awhile, he is uneasy by reason of it. Abraham's slips, for he had one or two, were made when he had left the land, and gone down among the Philistines; but he was not easy there: he must come back again. And Jacob—he had found a wife—nay, two—in Laban's land, but he was not content there. No, no child of God can be, whatever he may find in this world. We shall never find a heaven here. We may hunt the world through, and say, "This looks like a little paradise," but there is not any paradise this side of the skies, for a child of God at any rate. There is enough out there in the farm yard for the hogs, but there is not that which is suitable for the children. There is enough in the world for sinners, but not for saints. They have stronger, sharper, and more vehement desires, for they have a nobler life within them, and

they desire a *better* country, and even if they get entangled for awhile in this country, and in a certain measure identified with citizens of it, they are ill at ease—their citizenship is in heaven, and they cannot rest anywhere but there. After all, we confess to-night, and rejoice in the confession, that our best hopes are for things that are out of sight: our expectations are our largest possessions. The things that we have a title to, that we value, are ours to-day by faith: we do not enjoy them yet. But when our heirship shall be fully manifested, and we shall come to the full ripe age—oh, then shall we come into our inheritance, to our wealth, to the mansions, and to the glory, and to the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thus you see the reason why the Christian cannot go back. Though he has many opportunities he does not embrace any, he shrinks with repugnance from them all, for, through divine grace, he has had produced in his heart desires for something better.

Even when he does not realise as yet, or actually enjoy, that infinite good, which is something better than creature comfort or worldly ambition, the desires themselves become mighty bonds that keep him from returning to his former state. Dear brethren, let us cultivate these desires more and more. If they have such a separating, salutary, sanctifying influence upon our heart, and effect upon our character, in keeping us from the world, let us cultivate them much. Do you think that we meditate enough upon heaven? Look at the miser. When does he forget his gold? He dreams of it. He has locked it up to-night and he goes to bed, but he is afraid he heard a footstep down the stairs, and he goes to see. He looks to the iron safe: he would be quite sure that it is well secured. He cannot forget his dear gold. Let us think of heaven, of Christ, and of the blessings of the covenant, and let us thus keep our desires wide awake, and stimulate them to active exercise. The more they draw us to heaven, the more they withdraw us from the world.

III. It would be unreasonable if we did not vehemently resist every opportunity and every solicitation to go back.

The men of faith to whom the apostle referred in our text were not only strangers and pilgrims, but it is specially observed that *they confessed* that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They were a grand company. From an unit they had multiplied into a countless host. Sprang there not even of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable? Now, brethren, you see we have here a very strong reason for not returning. It is because you are the descendants, the spiritual descendants, of the patriarchs. Let me try to show you how urgent a motive for stedfastness this is. Practically, it comprises two or three considerations of the highest moment. One thing it implies

very obviously is that you thoroughly admire their example and fervently emulate their spirit. As you have glanced over the scroll of history, or narrowly scanned the records of men's lives, the pomp of Pharaoh has not dazzled you, but the purity of Joseph has charmed you; the choice of Moses was to your taste, though it did involve leaving a court where he was flattered, for fellowship with enslaved kinsmen by whom he was suspected; and, you would rather have been with Daniel in the lions' den than with Darius on the thone of empire. You have transferred their strong will to your own deliberate choice. And, when the jeer has been raised against canting methodists, you have said, "I am one of them." You have confessed as occasion served before the world, you have professed as duty called before the church, you have accepted the consequences as honesty demanded before angels and men. Therefore, in your heart of hearts you feel that you cannot go back. The vows of God are upon you. It is well they are. Review them often; refresh your memory with them frequently; recur to them and renew them in every time of trial and temptation. Howbeit, repent of them never, or woe betide you. There is a secret virtue in the confession, if it be steadfastly adhered to and zealously maintained. It is a talisman, believe me, against the contagion of an evil atmosphere that might otherwise instil poison into your constitution.

Again, there is another thing; you have joined yourself to an ancient fraternity that has something more than rules to guide or legends to captivate; for it has a combination of both, seeing it is rich in poetic lore. Why, it is on this that patriotism feeds as its daintiest morsel. "Thy statutes," said David, "have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Brother! there hath no sorrow befallen thee but what thy noble ancestors have celebrated in cheery tones, and set to music in cheerful strains. Oh, beloved! if you could forget the statutes, can you ever fail to remember the songs? There has never been a revival in the church that has not witnessed to the value of our psalmody. God be praised for our psalms and spiritual songs. Oh, how often they have made melody in our hearts to the Lord! While our voices blend, do not our very souls become more and more richly cemented? They are, in truth, the pilgrim's solace.

Another thing strikes me. I should not like you to overlook it. There is, in this chapter, a special commendation for faith in a pleasing variety of operations. But the speciality of the strangers and pilgrims is that they *all died in faith*. So, then, you cannot go back, because you cannot accomplish the end for which you went forward till you die. You have joined the company that makes the goal of life the object for which you live. Your aim is to make a noble exit. "Prepare to meet thy God" was the motto you started with. To go back can hardly cross your thoughts, when to look back seems to you charged

with imminent peril. Our lease of mortal life is fast running out. The time of our sojourn on earth is getting more and more brief. Therefore, because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed, it is but meet that our desire to reach the better country, and to enter the heavenly city should become more and more vehement, as "we nightly pitch our roving tent a day's march nearer home." It comes to this, brethren. You feel that you have little to show for your faith. It never built an ark like Noah; it never offered a sacrifice like Abraham; it never subdued kingdoms like Joshua; it never quenched the violence of fire as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Well, be it so; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved; and all those that die in faith are gathered with the great cloud of witnesses. Is not this enough to cheer the rank and file of the church?

IV. But, I must close with the sweetest part of the text, wherein it is shown that we have a great and blessed assurance vouchsafed to us as an acknowledgment, on the part of God, of those opportunities, and those yearnings persisted in. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Because they are strangers, and because they will not go back to their old abode, "therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." He might well be ashamed of that. What poor people God's people are—poor, many of them, in circumstances, but how many of them I might very well call poor as to spiritual things. I do not think if any of us had such a family as God has, we should ever have patience with them. We cannot, when we judge ourselves rightly, have patience with ourselves; but, how is it that God bears with the ill manners of such a froward, weak, foolish, forgetful generation as his people are. He might well be ashamed to be called their God, if he looked upon them as they are, and estimated them upon their merits. Own them! How can he own them? Does he not himself sometimes say of them, "How can I put them among the children?" Yet he devises means, and brings about the purposes of his grace. Viewed as they are, they may be compared to a rabble in so many respects, that it is marvellous he is not ashamed of them. Still, he never does discountenance them, and he proves that he is not ashamed of them, for he calls himself their God. "I will be your God," saith he, and he oftentimes seems to speak of it as a very joyful thing to his own heart. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." While he calls himself their God, he never forbids them to call him their God. In the presence of the great ones of the earth they may call him their God—anywhere—and he is not ashamed to be so called. Matchless condescension this! Have you not sometimes heard of a man who has become rich and has risen in the world, who has had some poor brother or some distant relative. When he has seen him in the street, he has been obliged to

speak to him and own him. But oh, how reluctantly it was done. I dare say he wished him a long way off, especially if he had some haughty acquaintance with him at the time, who would perhaps turn round, and say, "Why, who is that wretched, seedy-looking fellow you spoke to?" He does not like to say, "That's my brother;" or, "That's a relative of mine." Not so our Lord Jesus Christ. However low his people may sink, he is not ashamed to call them brethren. They may look up to him in all the depths of their degradation. They may call him a brother. He is in very fact a brother, born for their adversity, able and ready to redress their grievances, he is not ashamed to call them brethren. One reason for this seems to me to be, because he does not judge of them according to their present circumstances, but much rather according to their pleasant prospects. He takes account of what he has prepared for them. Notice the text, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: *for he hath prepared for them* a city. They are poor now, but God, to whom things to come are things present, sees them in their fair white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. All you can see in that poor child of God is a hard-working labouring man, mocked and despised of his fellows. But what does God see in him? He sees in him a dignity and a glory assimilated to his own. He hath put all things under the feet of such a man as that, and crowned him with glory and honour in the person of Christ, and the angels themselves are ministering servants to such. You see his outward attire, not his inner self—you see the earthly tabernacle, but the spirit newborn, immortal and divine—you see not that. Howbeit, God does. Or, if you have spiritual discernment to perceive the spiritual creature, you only see it as it is veiled by reason of the flesh, and beclouded by the atmosphere of this world; but he sees it as it will appear, when it shall be radiant like unto Christ, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. God sees the poorest, the least proficient disciple as a man in Christ; a perfect man come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; such indeed as he will be in that day when he shall see Christ, for then he shall be like him as he is. It seems too, in the text, that God looks to what he has prepared for these poor people. He hath prepared for them a city. Methinks, that by what he has prepared for them, we may judge how he esteems and loves them—estimating them by what he means them to be, rather than by what they appear to be at present. Look at this preparation just a minute. "He hath prepared for them"—"*them*." Though I delight to preach a free gospel, and to preach it to every creature under heaven, we must never forget to remind you of the speciality. "He hath prepared for them a city"—that is, for such as are strangers and foreigners—for such as have faith, and, therefore, have left the world, and gone out to follow Christ. "He hath prepared for *them*"—not "for all of you"

—only for such of you as answer the description on which we have been meditating has he prepared "a city."

Note what it is he has made ready for them. It is a city. This indicates a permanent abode. They dwelt in tents—Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—but he has prepared for them a city. Here we are tent-dwellers, and the tent is soon to be taken down. "We know that this earthly house of our" tent "shall be dissolved, but we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "He hath prepared a city." A city is a place of genial associations. In a lonely hamlet one has little company. In a city, especially where all the inhabitants shall be united in one glorious brotherhood, the true communism of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity may be realised in the purest sense and highest possible degree. In a city such as this there are plentiful occasions for intercourse, where mutual interests shall enhance mutual joy. "He hath prepared a city." It is a city too possessing immunities, and conferring dignity upon its residents. To be a burgess of the City of London is thought to be a great honour, and upon princes is it sometimes conferred; but, we shall have the highest honour that can be given, when we shall be citizens of the city which God has prepared.

I must not dwell on this theme, delightful as it is; I want a few words with you, my friends, direct and personal, before I close. Do not wonder, those of you who are the children of God, do not wonder if you have discomforts here. If you are what you profess to be, you are strangers: you do not expect men of this world to treat you as members of their community. If they do, be afraid. Dogs don't bark as a man goes by that they know: they bark at strangers. When people persecute *you* and slander *you*, no marvel. If you are a stranger, they naturally bark at you. Do not expect to find the comforts in this world that you crave after, that your flesh would long for. This is our inn, not our home. We tarry for a night: we are away in the morning. We may bear the annoyances of the eventide and the night, for the morning will break so soon. Remember that your greatest joy, while you are a pilgrim, is your God. So the text says, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Do you want a richer source of consolation than you have? Here is one that can never be diminished, much less exhausted. When the created streams are dry, go to this eternal fountain, and find it ever springing up. Your joy is your God: make your God your joy.

Now, what shall be said to those who are not strangers and foreigners? Ah, you dwell in a land where you find some sort of repose; but I have heavy tidings for you. This land in which you dwell, and all the works thereof, must be burned up. The city of which you, who have never been converted to Christ, are citizens, is a City of Destruction, and, as is its name, such will be its end. The King will send his armies

against that guilty city and destroy it, and if you are citizens of it, you will lose all you have—you will lose your souls—lose yourselves. "Whither away?" saith one—"Where can I find comfort then and security?" You must do as Lot did, when the angels pressed him and said, "Haste to the Mount lest thou be consumed." To what mountain, say you, shall I go? The mountain of safety is Calvary. Where Jesus died, there you shall live. There is death everywhere else but there. But there is life arising from his death. Oh, fly to him. "But how?" saith one. Trust him. God gave his Son, equal with himself, to bear the burden of human sin; and he died, a substitute for sinners,—a real substitute, an efficient substitute, for all who trust in him. If thou wilt trust thy soul with Jesus, thou art saved. Thy sin was laid on him: it is forgiven thee. It was blotted out when he nailed the handwriting of ordinances that were against thee to his cross. Trust him now and you are saved; you shall become, henceforth, a stranger and a pilgrim. In the better land you shall find the rest which you never can find here, and need not wish to find, for the land is polluted; let us away from it. The curse has fallen: let us get away to the country that never was cursed, to the city that is for ever blessed. Where Jesus dwells there may we find a home and abide for aye. God add his blessing to this discourse, and give a blessing to your souls, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HOW CAN I OBTAIN FAITH?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 21ST, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—Romans x. 17.

IT is difficult to make men understand that the salvation of the gospel is not by works but entirely by grace, that it is not presented to men as the reward of their own endeavours, but is given to them freely upon their accepting it by an act of simple faith or trust in Jesus Christ. However plainly we may preach this truth, there will always be some who will misunderstand us, and as many more who will raise objections against it, as if it were their part to give an opinion, and not to do as they are bidden by the Lord. But when men are brought under the teaching of the word, to see that the pardon of their sins, and the acceptance of their souls does not lie with any merit of their own, or any doings of their own, another difficulty generally presents itself: they say, "What is this faith of which you speak?" and when we assure them that it is a simple trust or confidence in the finished work of Christ, then straightway they say, "How can we get this faith? How can we obtain this confidence?" To us, who have faith, this question is very easy to answer, for when we heard the gladsome news of a finished salvation for lost sinners, complete forgiveness for the guilty, and acceptance for the ungodly, simply upon believing in Jesus, we came to Jesus, and we trusted in him, and we continue still to trust, and we have joy and peace through believing. We see far more reasons for belief than for doubt. Yet, nevertheless, there are hundreds and thousands who are awakened, and seriously enquiring, to whom this is a great difficulty—"How can I get the faith which gives me possession of Christ Jesus, and brings me salvation?" Our text is the ready answer, practically a complete answer; not doctrinally or theologically complete, but practically perfect. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "But faith is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, is it not?" Certainly. "And it is given by the Spirit to God's own chosen?" Assuredly; yet, nevertheless, it was not necessary for the apostle to mention those facts here. Some persons are always for having a whole system

of theology in every sermon, but it is not needful that they should be gratified. Paul is clear enough about the work of the Spirit in other places, and it is not needful that he should introduce that subject into every line he writes. It was practically unnecessary for him to mention that subject in the present instance, and, therefore, he did not do so. It would sometimes puzzle rather than instruct an enquirer if we were to go into the full details of a matter. For instance, if I am thirsty, how shall I quench my thirst? By a draught of water. But in what way can I obtain water? It quite suffices for practical purposes for you to tell me to go to the tap or the fountain. There is no need to explain to me before I drink that the water is supplied by a company, and forced to the spot by sundry machines, having been first extracted from the great fountains beneath by artesian wells, or drawn from the river at Thames Ditton. Nor would it be needful in answer to my question to trace the river to the clouds, and to treat upon the formation of vapour by the skill and wisdom of God. Practically, to the thirsty man all you want to say is, "There's the water, drink." I will add another illustration. A man is hungry, and he asks you, "How can I get bread?" "Go to the baker's," you say. The answer is complete enough for him; it meets the case at once. If he wants a larger declaration of how bread is obtained, we can give it to him at another time, when he is no longer hungry; we will tell him how the corn is sown in the furrowed earth, and how by mysterious processes of nature it germinates, grows, and ripens; we will trace it from the reaper to the thresher, and from the thresher to the mill, and we will also show that daily bread is as much a gift from heaven as the manna which dropped down upon the hungry people in the wilderness. But, it is not needful for the feeding of the hungry that we should on every occasion go into all those details, although we hold very sound views upon them. And when you are dealing with an anxious person, it will suffice to say to him, "Faith cometh by hearing;" further information can be supplied under happier circumstances. I mean to keep to our text this morning, and if any shall charge me with an omission of the work of the Spirit, or a failure to trace all saving faith to the electing grace of God, I shall bear the charge without murmuring, only saying that my soul rejoices as much as that of any man living in the work of the Spirit of God; and, that the electing love of God and his determinate purposes are precious truths to me. If the text was sufficient for Paul; it will, I trust, be sufficient for you.

May the Spirit of God assist us while we meditate upon *the way by which faith cometh*. This shall be followed by a brief indication of *certain obstructions which often lie in that way*; and then we will conclude by dwelling upon *the importance that faith should come to us by that appointed road*.

I. First, then, THE WAY BY WHICH FAITH COMES TO MEN. "Faith cometh by hearing."

It may help to let the truth out more clearly, if we say, *negatively*, that it does not come by any other process than by hearing;—not by any mysterious and strange method, but in the most simple and natural mode conceivable, namely, by the hearing of the word.

Some imagine that faith comes by *hereditary descent*, and they act upon

the supposition. Hence, in certain churches, birthright membership is thought to be a proper practice, and the child of a Christian is thought to be a Christian. In some other churches, though the theory would not be stated in so many words, yet it is practically accepted, and children of pious parents are regarded as scarcely needing conversion. The text is forgotten which saith that the heirs of salvation are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." The typical covenant secured outward privileges to the children born after the flesh, but under the covenant of grace the blessing is secured to the spiritual and not to the natural seed. "He who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise" (Gal. iv. 23). That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and nothing more: the new-born nature is not transmissible from father to son like a natural temperament or a cast of countenance. I know the answer will be that "the promise is to us and to our children," but it will be well for the objector to reply to himself by completing the quotation, —"even to as many as the Lord your God shall call." The fact is, that nothing spiritual is inherited by carnal generation. Our children, even if we are far advanced in grace, will still be "shapen in iniquity." No matter how high the sainthood of the professing Christian, his child (when capable of understanding) must for himself become a personal believer in Jesus.

It appears to be thought possible to infuse grace by *sacraments*. There are persons yet alive who teach that a babe may be regenerated by certain aqueous processes, and be thereby placed in "a state of salvation." But is not faith a perpetual concomitant of regeneration? and what is that regeneration worth which leaves a person an unbeliever, and, consequently, "condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God"? Rest assured, that as faith does not come by descent, neither can it be produced by any rite which recognises that descent: it comes in one way, and in one way only in every case, and that is, by the hearing of the word. To every person, whoever he may be, though nursed in the bosom of the church, and introduced to that church by the most solemn ritual, we are bound to say, You must hear as well as others, and you must believe as the result of that hearing as well as others, or else you will remain short of saving grace. Faith is not a mystery juggled into us by the postures, genuflexions, and mumblings of priests. We have heard a great deal about sacramental efficacy, but I think a man must have extraordinary hardihood who would say that either baptism, or the so-called Eucharist, are the sure creators of faith; yet see I not what saving service these forms can render to unbelieving men if they leave them in an unbelieving condition, and, consequently, in a state of condemnation. Seeing that without faith it is impossible to please God, the grace supposed to be conveyed by the mere participation in sacraments is of small value, if it cannot give the cardinal requisite for acceptance before God. Faith cannot be washed into us by immersion, nor sprinkled upon us in christening; it is not to be poured into us from a chalice, nor generated in us by a consecrated piece of bread. There is no magic about it; it comes by hearing the word of God, and by that way only.

These are superstitions, you tell me, and sarcely need to be mentioned

here; very well, then, we will have done with them, and treat of superstitions which linger in our own congregations. There are some who fancy that faith cometh by *feeling*. If they could feel emotions either of horror or of exquisite delight, they would then, they think, be the possessors of faith; but till they have felt what they have heard described in certain biographies of undoubtedly good men, they cannot believe, or even if they have a measure of faith, they cannot hope that it is true faith. Faith doth not come by feeling, but through faith arises much of holy feeling, and the more a man lives in the walk of faith, as a rule, the more will he feel and enjoy the light of God's countenance. Faith hath something firmer to stand upon than those ever-changing frames and feelings which, like the weather of our own sunless land, is fickle and frail, and changeth speedily from brightness into gloom. You may get feeling from faith, and the best of it, but you will be long before you will find any faith that is worth the having, if you try to evoke it from frames and feelings.

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame;
But wholly lean on Jesus' name;
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Some, also, have supposed that true faith will come to men by *dreams and visions*. It is surprising how a belief in these things lingers still in what is called this age of light; the notion is still current that if you dream of seeing Jesus, or fancy you have seen him while awake, or if a passage of Scripture strikes you, or if you hear or imagine that you hear a voice speaking to you, you are then a believer. Now, faith in Christ is like faith in anyone else, it comes to us by the same kind of mental processes, and is based upon simple principles and plain matters of fact, and needs no vision of the night. Though you should see all the angels in heaven, it would not prove that you would go to heaven, any more than my having seen the Pope's body guard would be a proof that I shall be made a Cardinal. Things which are seen of the eye save not, for the things which are seen are temporal, and cannot work eternal salvation. Moreover, men saw Christ, and yet pierced him and blasphemed him. Visions have been seen by heathens like Nebuchadnezzar, and angels have appeared to bad men like Balaam who, though he sighed out, "Let me die the death of the righteous," yet perished, fighting against the God of Israel. True faith has a more solid basis for its fabric than the fleeting fancies of the mind.

I beg you to notice, too, that it does not say in the text that faith comes through the *eloquence*, earnestness, or any other good quality of the preacher. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word, not of man, but of God. The word of God is the substance of faith-creating preaching; it is by the hearing of God's word, and not by any other hearing that saving faith comes to the soul. I may hear a man descant upon the gospel with all the eloquence that can be commanded by the most fluent tongue, yet if my faith comes to me because the man spoke pathetically, or poetically, or argumentatively, or rhetorically, it is a poor

miserable faith; being born of the power of the flesh, it will die, and so prove itself unlike the faith which springs from the incorruptible word of God, for that liveth and abideth for ever. On the other hand, I may hope for faith if I am listening to the true gospel, the very word of God, though the man who speaks it may be of stammering lips, and his voice may be disagreeable to my ear, and there may be much about his manner that does not commend itself to me. If he preaches truth it is by hearing not him, the man, but by hearing the word of God, that I shall come to faith. I do desire ever, as a preacher, to feel that it is not my word but God's word that saves souls; we are to explain it and expound it, but we are not to add to it, take from or conceive that we can improve it. We must not go into the pulpit and say, "I have been working out a subject from my own mind, and I am going to give you the result of my thoughts." We had better keep our own thoughts for some other place, and give the people the revealed truth of God. The theory now-a-days is that all preachers worth hearing by this refined generation must be profound thinkers, and inventors of improved theologies. Brethren, let man's thoughts perish for ever; the thoughts of God and not the thoughts of man will save souls. The truth of God should be spoken simply, with as little as possible of the embellishments of metaphysics, and philosophy, and high culture, and all that stuff. I say the word of God delivered as we find it is that which, when heard, brings faith to the souls of men. I counsel you, my occasional hearers, you who perhaps have come freshly to this city, or who reside where you have a choice of ministry, seek not that which tickles your ear, but that which your conscience approves as consistent with the word of God; and, though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you that which is not God's word, do not listen to us, for it will be mischievous to you. Hear you what God the Lord speaketh, and hear nothing else. What though he shall sound forth his word through a ram's-horn, if it be God's Spirit that giveth forth a certain sound, it shall be more profitable to your soul than though the silver trumpet should be set to the mouth of falsehood, and the sweetest music should regale your ear. The matter of a discourse is far more important than the manner. Saving faith never comes from hearing falsehood, but from the word of God alone.

I ought, perhaps, to add that the expression "by hearing," though of course literally it must be confined to the hearing of words vocally uttered, is meant to include in its spirit the reading of the word; for reading is a sort of hearing with the eyes, and faith has often come and will often come to men while they are reading the word of God for themselves. We must not kill the spirit of the text by excessive regard to the mere letter of it, and we should do so if we excluded reading, which is a quiet hearing of the still small voice of the printed page. Faith comes by the word of God reaching our minds, and our knowing and understanding it. The entrance of God's word giveth light. "Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live." Thus, we have spoken of it negatively.

Now, *positively*: "Faith cometh by hearing." Sometimes faith has come into men's minds by *hearing the simple statement* of the gospel. They have longed to be saved, and they have been told that Jesus the

Son of God condescended to come into this world and to take upon himself the form of man, and as man to be partaker of our infirmities, and to offer himself as a sacrifice in the room, place, and stead of sinners; they have, moreover, been told that whosoever trusts in this substitutionary sacrifice shall be saved, and straightway they have believed. All they have wanted has been merely to be informed of the way of salvation. God's Spirit has so prepared them that they have believed almost as soon as they have heard the saving truth. In many cases the only difficulty in the way of salvation has been a want of understanding the word. I know in my own case I would have given all I had, if I might but have been informed what I must do to be saved. Though I frequented places where the gospel was preached, I did not catch the meaning of believing, it puzzled me much. I do not remember to have heard the simple declaration that to trust in Jesus Christ would save my soul; or, possibly, I did hear it with my outward ears, but I must have been strangely infatuated, for I did not understand the sense; and I have often thought if I could have heard the way of faith simply stated, my soul would have leaped into liberty long before. I will not so say; but I am persuaded that faith often comes by hearing the simple declaration that God accepts sinners, not for what they are in themselves but for what Christ is, and that when sinners believe in Jesus they are saved there and then, and are acceptable with God through Jesus Christ his dear Son. The mere statement of this has brought, by the operation of the Spirit of God, faith into the soul. "How is this?" saith one. Well, it is because the gospel commends itself to some hearts as true upon the very first blush of it, it strikes them as being undoubtedly the gospel of God. It is the same in other matters; you sometimes hear a story about which you say, "Well, I do not now, it may be correct, but I shall have to look a little into that before I am certain;" but you often hear statements which you accept at once, because they commend themselves to your understanding, and you feel that they must be true. There are minds which God has so prepared that the moment they hear the gospel they respond to it. I think I hear the seeker after truth exclaim when he heard the gospel, "True? Why, how could it be otherwise? It is so divinely grand, so harmonious, so good, so gracious, so unexpected—nobody could have thought of it but God himself—it must be the truth." Having long sought goodly pearls of truth, the illuminated eye catches the gleam of the gospel and discerns it to be a priceless gem. Those are blessed indeed who are thus at once brought unto faith by the statement of the gospel.

To some others, the convincing point has been *the suitability of the gospel to their case*, for while they have heard it preached as a gospel for sinners, they have felt that they were certainly among that class. When the preacher has gone on to describe the misery of the fall, the utter ruin of human nature, its deceitfulness, feebleness, fickleness, and folly, the hearer has said, "Is the gospel sent to those who are thus lost, guilty, and impotent? Why, I am precisely in that condition?" And, then, when its great command is stated, namely, simple trust in Jesus, the soul perceives the suitability of the way of grace. We do not go to heaven to bring Christ down, or dive into the deeps to bring him up from the dead; we can neither keep the law nor find an

atonement for our transgressions; but this simple trust, oh how suitable it is to undone sinners. Nothing to do—I can do nothing; nothing to bring—I have nothing to bring; it suits my case. Glory be to God for devising a plan so adapted to our wants. From the suitabilty of the gospel to the sinner, many have been by God's Spirit led to saving faith in Jesus, and so faith has come by hearing.

In many, I do not doubt, faith has come through hearing of *the condescending pity and the melting love of Jesus.* Oh, that we dwelt more on this; that he loved his enemies, that he died for the ungodly, that his heart yearns over the lost sheep, that he is willing to receive prodigal sons, for he is full of grace and truth.

> "His heart is made of tenderness,
> His bowels melt with love."

When such texts as the following have been preached on:—"This man receiveth sinners." "Come unto me all ye that labour." "Ho, every one that thirsteth," etc. "All manner of sin and transgression shall be forgiven unto men." "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," that melting strain has touched the heart, and led the most hardened to believe in a Saviour so kind to the undeserving. Men have found it impossible not to believe in a friend so self-sacrificing, a Redeemer so altogether lovely. The sweet love of Jesus has an omnipotence in it to win souls. They yield "by mighty love subdued," unable to resist its charms, and as if they could hold out no longer, they throw themselves by an act of faith into the Saviour's arms. I can well understand their singing, "I do believe, I *must* believe in such a friend as this." Faith comes by hearing of the free forgiveness procured by the agony, the stripes, the wounds, the death of Jesus, the lover of our souls.

At other times, faith has come not so much through hearing the statement of the gospel as from hearing of *its authority.* I may believe a statement because it looks like truth. I may, on the other hand, accept it not at all because I have myself perceived the apparent truth of it, but because of the person who tells it to me. And this is a very right and acceptable kind of faith. What has God said about my salvation? Before I hear it I am prepared to believe it on the testimony of God. He says it, and that is enough for me. I believe this Bible to be his book; I hear what it says, and whatsoever the Lord God hath said I must and will receive, whether it appears plain or not. There are persons who when they have heard the gospel preached have not at first believed it, but if it has pleased the Spirit of God to lead the minister to show that the gospel is of divine appointment, that the way proclaimed is ordained by God himself, and that God has set the sanction of his promise upon it—"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"—and has also set upon it the second sanction of his threatening—"He that believeth not shall be damned"—then they have yielded and given over all further question. God bids them trust in Jesus, and they do so through his grace. Without canvassing the statement itself they receive what God teaches, and since he hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin they receive him as such: since

he has said, "Look unto me and be saved," they look because God bids them look, and they are saved. To believe in Jesus is a command from God's own mouth, and is, therefore, to be obeyed, and the more so, because "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son; and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

In some cases, too, the coming of faith has been helped by hearing and perceiving *the veracity of the subordinate testifiers of the gospel*,—I mean the writers of the sacred book, the prophets, and chiefly the apostles. These men are worthy of credit—they were honest, unsophisticated men, and they certainly gained nothing by testifying that Christ was the Messiah, and that he died and rose again from the dead. One of them, the Apostle Paul, lost his position, which was one of great eminence, and spent his whole life in toil, and suffering, and reproach, and ended with a bloody death because of what he preached, and thus he proved that he was a sincere, honest, upright man. If Paul or any other of the apostles were in the witness-box, nobody could demur to their evidence; whatever they said we should believe, because the men were truthful witnesses. Now, sometimes, persons have been led into faith in Christ, by feeling that those whom he sent to be testifiers to his person, death, and resurrection were evidently true to the core, and, therefore, their word was worthy of all acceptation.

I believe, dear friends, that faith has come by hearing in another way. Perhaps the preacher has not so much stated the gospel, and brought forward its authority, as *explained it*, and so faith has come. If we spent our time in nothing else but just explaining the text, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," we might achieve a blessed life-work, and perhaps might see greater results than when our ministry takes a wider range. When the preacher takes up one by one the soul difficulties which prevent man from seeing what faith is, and keep him away from looking to Christ, and when he tries to show, as he should, that all the hope of the sinner lies out of himself, none of it in himself, that all his help for salvation is laid upon one that is mighty, even Jesus Christ the Son of God, and that he must look away from his own feelings, and prayings, and doings, and even away from his own believings as any ground of confidence, and must rest simply and alone upon the one sacrifice of Jesus; it has often happened that faith has come through the hearing of such an explanatory word.

In some cases, too, faith has come when the word has possessed a peculiar *soul-revealing pointedness* in it to the hearer's particular case. Remember the Samaritan woman. Our Lord Jesus Christ explained to her the gospel, but she does not appear to have been enlightened by his explanations: it was that home stroke of his—"Go, call thy husband and come hither," which won her to faith. Such revealings of the thoughts and intents of the heart will occur in any God-sent preaching of the gospel, just because the word pierces to the dividing of soul and spirit, and lays bare the secrets of the soul. Then it is that hearers cry, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Thus, by the guidance of the Spirit, the word finds out the man, and faith cometh by hearing.

Faith, also, comes in to many by hearing, when we detail *the experience* of those who have tasted and handled the good word of life; when the preacher or teacher tells how he trusted in Jesus, and found pardon, peace, and life eternal; when he is able to point to others who have felt the same, some of whom, perhaps, were even greater offenders than the person addressed, then conviction and faith are wrought in the mind. We bid you see what Jesus has done for us, in the hope that you will trust and try him for yourselves. Jesus prayed for those who shall believe on him through our word, and we hope you will be among the number.

To set the whole matter clearly, we will suppose that you are labouring under a very serious disease, and a physician professes to heal you. You are quite willing to believe in him, but you cannot blindly follow any man, for there are thousands of quacks and impostors. You naturally want to know something about him. Now, in what way would you go to work to get faith in him? How would faith be likely to come to you? It would come by hearing. You hear him speak, and you perceive that he understands your case, for he describes exactly all your symptoms, even those which none know but yourself and a skilful physician. You feel already some confidence in him. He next describes to you as much of the method of cure as you can comprehend, and it seems to you to be very reasonable, and withal suitable to the requirements of your case. His proposal commends itself to your best judgment, and you are already a stage nearer submission to his mode of operation. Then you enquire as to the man's character; you find that he is no mere pretender, but an authorised, skilful, long-established practitioner, well known for truthfulness, uprightness, and every good quality. Moreover, suppose in addition to this he charges you nothing whatever, but does everything gratis, having evidently no motive of gain, but being altogether disinterested, moved only by real pity for you, and a kind desire to remove your pain and save your life. Can you any longer refuse to believe and submit? But if, in addition to all this, he shows you his case-book, and bids you read case after case similar to your own in which he has affected perfect cure, and if some of these are your own acquaintances, if they are persons whom you know and esteem, why, sir, you will not insult him by saying, "I wish I could believe you;" but you will be unable to help trusting him, unless you are unwilling to be cured. Faith, in such a case, does not depend upon the will at all; you are convinced by hearing, and you become a believer. In the same way faith comes by hearing. You are unreasonable if you sit still and say, "I cannot make myself believe;" of course you cannot, but you hear, do you not, of how Christ heals sinners; you hear that he is backed by divine authority; you see that he really does save those who trust him, and what more of evidence do you want? O soul! it seems to me a harder thing not to believe in Jesus than to believe in him, if you are indeed willing to be made whole. When one has heard these things, and understands them, surely the mind, if it be not wilfully blinded, must receive the Saviour. May God forgive your long perverseness, and by his Spirit open your eyes to see the simplicity of that faith which comes by hearing the word of God.

II. My time, however, flies much too rapidly this morning, and I

must be brief on the second very important head, namely, OBSTRUCTIONS WHICH OFTEN BLOCK UP THIS WAY.

One is a *want of intention*, by which I mean that many persons come to hear, but they have no wish to be led into faith. Like the butterflies which flit from flower to flower, they extract no honey because they come not for such a purpose; while the bees dive into the cups and bells of the flowers, and come up loaded with their luscious food. Oh, if men came to hear, praying to be endowed with faith in Jesus, faith would surely come to them by hearing. Many persons in hearing a sermon, are like children looking at a cornfield—it is full of yellow garlic, or perhaps of scarlet poppies, and they cry "What a lovely field;" but the farmer thinks not so, he is looking for the wheat. Many a hearer watches for pretty speeches and flowery metaphors, and cries, "How well he puts it! What a well-turned sentence! How sweetly he quotes poetry!" and so on. Bah! Is that what you come to God's house for? O fools and slow of heart, is this your end in hearing the life-giving gospel of the bleeding Lamb? I assure you it is not this that we are aiming at in preaching to you. If you came to look after the good corn, you would care little for the gaudy poppies of a flaunting eloquence so much regarded by the men of these days. Come with the intent to find faith in Jesus; cry to God to make his word effectual to your salvation, and then hearing will be quite another business with you. Alas! I fear you will perish, let us preach as we may, while we are regarded by you as mere orators to be criticised, and not as witnesses whose testimony is to be weighed.

Some do not hear aright for *want of attention*. Sleepy hearers are not likely to be led to faith. Eutychus may fall from the third loft and be taken up for dead, but he is not likely to become a believer by sleeping, even though Paul should be the preacher. We want attention in order to the real reception of the word. Oh how pleasant it is to preach to earnest hearers who lean forward to catch every syllable, anxious to know how they can be saved. Wandering hearts lose the benefit of the truth, and vain minds trifle away the privilege of a gospel ministry. Take heed how ye hear, otherwise ye may remain hearers only, and so perish in unbelief.

With many a *want of candour* is another reason why faith does not come by hearing. If a man hears with a prejudiced heart, making up his mind before hand what he will believe, he is not likely to be convinced, he puts himself as far as he can out of the reach of benefit. When the heart rebels against the word: when it says, "If this be true I am living a bad life, and I shall have to give up my pleasures, therefore will not accept it." Well then, faith does not come and cannot come by such hearing. Faith comes by hearing when a man does, as it were, give himself up to the word of God, like a person who is badly wounded and surrenders himself to the surgeon's hand. Oh, if I had a gangrened limb and it must be taken off, I think I would pray for patience enough to say, "O sir, if you can but spare my life cut to the very bone." When it is the soul that is concerned I would say to the preacher, "Sir, do not flatter me, do not tell me that which will please but delude me; I do not want your flattery, I do not want your fine words. Sir, tell me what I am, and

where I am in the sight of God, and how I can be saved; for it will little satisfy me to wake up in hell and remember that I used to hear a fine orator. I want to be saved in deed and of a truth." "Ah," says one, "but some preachers are not only bold, but rough in their expression." Yes, but suppose you were nearly drowned, and a strong swimmer plunged into the stream and plucked you out just as you were sinking for the last time, if he dislocated your arm would you grumble? No, you would say, "The bone can be set at another time, but my life could not have been restored." And so with the preacher, though he be rough, if it be the truth which he speaks, only pray that it may save your soul, and be content to put up with the man's infirmity, if by any means you may attain to salvation by Jesus Christ.

With some, however, hearing does not bring faith, because they hear *without any after meditation.* There is a great trial going on, as you know, in the Tichborne case. Every juryman, I doubt not, wants to judge righteously. I am sure the sleepy one is not likely to do so, and I am pretty clear that the juryman who is most likely to get at the truth will be the man who, when he gets away from the court, having heard attentively all the time, takes home the notes of the evidence, weighs it, and makes comparisons, and endeavours to sift out the truth. So I would say to you when you hear us preach, sift the sermon afterwards, turn our sermons over, pick holes in them if you like, and find out our mistakes; but oh, do search into the truth, and be not content till you find it. If you want to find Christ, the wisdom of God, you should seek for him as for silver. You are likely to believe the truth when your mind turns it over and over. Here is a bag, and I am willing to make a man rich, and, therefore, I drop into it pound after pound, but I find that the bag is just as empty as before; the reason is plain,—there are holes in the bag, and the money drops through. Too many hearers are as a bag full of holes, and golden sermons will not bless them because they wilfully forget all. They will never come to faith because they do but look at their face in the glass of the word, and go their way and forget what manner of men they are. Oh for hearers who only need to know the gospel, and the evidence of it, and then consent thereto, saying, "It is the truth of God, I cannot quarrel with it; I joyfully receive it." Such are saved souls.

III. But, now, I am sorry to be so brief, but I must conclude by speaking of THE IMPORTANCE THAT FAITH SHOULD COME TO US BY HEARING. I will let my words drop rapidly without any ornament, and remind you, dear friend, that if you have been a hearer and faith has not come to you, you are, this moment, in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. You believe not in Christ, and you make God a liar, because ye have not believed in his only-begotten Son. The wrath of God abideth on you. You are dead while you live. Without God, without Christ, and strangers to the covenant of promise. My soul pities you—will you not pity yourselves? Hearers only; faithless, graceless, Christless! Christ died, but you have no part in his death. His blood cleanses from sin, but your sin remains upon you. Christ has risen, and he pleads before the throne,—you have no part in that intercession. He is preparing a place for his people, but that place is not for you. Oh, unhappy soul! oh, wretched soul!

out of favour with God, at enmity with eternal love, destitute of eternal life! Truly, if Jesus were here he would weep over you, as he did over Jerusalem, and say, "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

Ah, remember, though your present state is terrible it is not all. You will soon die, and you will die without faith. Remember that word of Christ, it is one of the most terrible I know of, "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." To die in a ditch, to die in a prison, to die on the gallows, none of us would desire it; but to die in your sins! O God, it is hell, it is eternal damnation. May the great Lord save you! But to perish for ever will be your lot as surely as you live, except you believe in Jesus and that speedily, for soon you will be out of the reach of all hearing. No more sermons, no more invitations of grace. Oh, what would you give to have the gospel once more when you are cast away from it!! No more the preacher's voice, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die!" No more the pitiful accents of one who loves your souls, and fain would snatch you as firebrands from the flame: around you all will be dark, and hard, and the only message for you will be this,—"He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

> "There are no acts of pardon passed,
> In that cold grave to which we haste;
> But darkness, death, and long despair,
> Reign in eternal silence there."

Ah! then it will be no assuagement of your miseries that you once heard the gospel; it will rather increase your torment. Conscience will cry aloud—"I heard the gospel of grace, and I heard the arguments which proved it true, but I rejected a gospel which God himself proclaimed, a gospel which was genuine on the face of it, a gospel full of such love as ought to have melted a rock, a gospel that was brought to me without money and without price, a gospel that was pressed upon me from my infancy to my hoar hairs—I rejected it, I wilfully rejected it, not because it was not true, but because I would believe a lie, and would not believe the living God." Eternal Father, thou who art mighty to save, let not one among us go down into the pit with a lie in his right hand, refusing to accept the gospel of thy blessed Son! The Lord save you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans x.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TWO YOKES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, JANUARY 14TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron."—Jeremiah xxviii. 13.

ALL through the book of Jeremiah you will observe that the prophet taught the people not only by words, but by symbols. At one time he took his mantle and hid it in the earth till it was soiled and worn, and then taught them something by wearing it. At another time he took an earthen pot and broke it in their presence. And on this occasion he put a yoke about his own neck as the token that Israel should be subdued beneath the power of Nebuchadnezzar. This was a strange method of teaching. I have sometimes heard complaints made by those who are fond of criticizing things they know nothing about—when a teacher puts a truth very plainly, if he shall, as it were, act what he says, he is upbraided at once as being histrionic. I know not what ungenerous words are hurled at him. Yet after all, this was what Jeremiah did. He taught the people by signs and symbols. So, too, our Lord himself. I doubt not, that when he uttered those words, "Consider the lilies," he stooped down and plucked a lily; and when he said, "Consider the ravens," he pointed to the ravens flying overhead, in the sky. At any rate, we know that once he took a little child, and set it in the midst of them. What an outcry there would be if I were to take a little child and set him here and preach about him! Did we use any kind of symbol, to what ridicule we should expose ourselves! The fact is, we might do much more good if we did less regard the general current of public opinion, and ventured to do strange things, that anyhow the truth of God might come home to a slumbering generation, and the Word of God, which must be learnt by them or they must perish, were made to tell upon their minds. The prophet Jeremiah, though exceedingly faithful in his mission, which he discharged as God would have him discharge it, with many tears in great love and deep anxiety, nevertheless had a great obstacle in his way. He was met by false prophets who withstood and contradicted him to his face. Not

so very surprising either. It must ever be expected that it will be so. If God shall speak by any man, there shall be some other who protests that God speaks by him to the contrary. If there be a Christ, there will be an Antichrist; if there be a Simon Peter, there will be a Simon Magus; if there shall be raised up by God a Luther, there shall be an Eckius, or some other controversialist who shall seek to resist and overthrow him. Let no man's heart then fail him if he be flatly contradicted when he bears testimony for God. Let him rather expect it, and go on never caring, for the fact is, the truth will outlive error, and in the long run that Word of God before which all things else are as grass and as the flower, the perishing flower of the field—the Word of God shall endure for ever and triumph over the ruin of all the words of men. Tremble not, ye feeble adherents of the truth, who fear lest your weakness should make the truth itself weak, and the strong logic and the powerful rhetoric of its adversaries should overturn the oracles of God. It cannot be. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the gospel, mighty though they be both in power and in sophistry. The truth shall abide; the right shall prevail; for God is faithful, and Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

With this, by way of preliminary observation, we will now come to the text, and endeavour to make some use of it for ourselves. Hananiah took off the symbolic yoke, the wooden yoke, from Jeremiah's neck and broke it. Jeremiah comes again, and says, "You have broken the yoke of wood, but God has commanded that ye shall now wear yokes of iron." They were not benefited, therefore, by the change, but the reverse. This is suggestive of a broad principle. From the symbol, which was applicable in one case, we draw a general truth. Whenever men say of God, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us," they may do so if they will; but instead of the yokes of wood they will be sure to get yokes of iron. If they will not submit to the government of Christ, they will have to submit to the tyranny of Satan. Some yoke they will have to wear, and if they reject the easy yoke of the Christ of God, the wooden yoke as it were which he puts on men, there shall be made for them yokes of iron, which they shall neither be able to break off nor yet to support.

So our thought will run this way. First, that *men must wear some yoke or other;* and, secondly, that *the yoke of Christ is a very easy one;* and, thirdly, that *when it is refused, it is inevitable that men should wear a heavier one.*

I. MEN MUST WEAR SOME YOKE. It is so naturally. There is no stage of life in which this is not the case. The child must bear the yoke in his youth. He is an unhappy child that is under no control. Probably there is nothing so ruinous to a man as to be allowed to have his own way, while yet his judgment is not ripe enough to guide him. And when we advance into youth, we are usually placed in some position of life where we are under obligations to some superior, be he parent, or guardian, or employer. Nor if we become what is called our own masters, does it make much difference. As things go now, I think there are no people that are their own masters, for the masters are bound to yield to the terms which the servants dictate; and this condition of things is getting more and more rife.

I shall not discuss the right or wrong of this, where questions arise between enterprising capitalists and skilful labourers, but I will say that if the employed claim liberty, the masters might very well be allowed a portion of that choice prerogative. As it is now, I am sure he that says, "I am a master," is as much under the yoke to his servants as the servant is under the yoke to his master. That a man who lives in the midst of society should hold some relationship to all around him is indispensable. But men are always for changing their forms of government. Some nations have a revolution almost with every moon, but for all that there is still a yoke upon them; and if it were ever to come to anarchy, to mob rule—ah, I warrant you, it would be a yoke of iron, and of red hot iron too. God save us from it. No yoke is so hard to bear as that yoke which a people put upon themselves when they reject all order, break through all law, and will not submit to any principle or any government, however just or righteous. You cannot get on in this world without a yoke of some sort. We are not going to wear a tyrant's yoke any of us. Let lords and lands have what masters they will: in this land of ours we will be free, and our own masters still; but the selfishness of individuals or of classes must never determine the boundary lines of power or of privilege; for we can only maintain our freedom by everyone of us paying that right obedience to the law which is due from every citizen, if he would promote alike his own comfort and the common weal.

Away from those lower grounds into higher spheres—it is certainly true that we must wear the yoke. God has made us, and not we ourselves; and God has made us to be his servants. We are daily in dependence on him for the bread we eat. If any man shall say he is not dependent upon God, I will at least reply to him, "You are dependent for the air you breathe and the power to breathe it. The life that is within you hangs upon a thread, and that thread is in the hand of the Most High." Every moment each one of us is most certainly sustained by God. And in return for this support, there is something asked, namely, that we would submit to his will; that we would obey his law, which is perfect, and just, and right; and that having sinned against him we should rebel no longer or continue his enemies, but be reconciled to him. We are made dependent creatures, and from that very fact we must wear a yoke unto God.

Moreover, dear friends, we are all so constituted as creatures, with such passions and propensities, that when we break one yoke, the yoke which it is meet we should wear, and do not serve God, we at once bend our necks to another yoke and begin to serve something else—we serve ourselves, and oh, the slavery of serving one's self! He that makes his belly his god, and bows down to the lusts of the flesh, serves a tyrant indeed. Something or other we must serve, not only because we are dependent creatures, but also it seems to be stamped upon us that we must follow some great principle, and must yield ourselves to some spiritual influence. A yoke of some kind or another we must submit to. The man who shall say, "I am perfectly free, and I live for nothing but myself," is so mean an animal, that he is hardly worthy to be called a man. In his boasted exemption from all regard to his fellow creatures and to his God, he sets himself up, in his own

esteem, and that after a diabolical model, alone and apart in his awful selfishness, like an iceberg to melt away, and may be to crush others as he moves along his course. What is he but a beacon, against which all are to be warned? Sir, the yoke fits the human neck, and the human neck was made to wear it. We must have some God, we must have some ruler, we must have some principle, which shall master us, and be it ours in God's name to choose the right and the best master, or else, woe be unto us.

II. Not to dwell longer upon our first point, I proceed to notice THAT THE YOKE OF CHRIST IS AN EASY YOKE. It is, as it were, a yoke of wood. Let us dwell upon this awhile. God grant that some who have never worn that yoke may, by the Holy Spirit's power, be led to carry it.

If you become a servant of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the man of Nazareth, he asks of you nothing but what is absolutely right. His life, which is the Christian's law written out in living characters, is perfection itself. His precepts which distil like dew from his lips, are all pure and good, just and kind. It ought to be enough for a man, and would be enough for him if he were not fallen, to know that all rule is right, and to submit to it at once. When God gives a man a noble spirit, he pants to enlist in honourable service. He craves a post in the council or the camp. His heart's enquiry is, "Where can I find a leader who will always lead me aright? Where shall I discover a law which will never lead me into evil, if I obey it? Where can I discover an example, which I may imitate in its very jots and tittles, and yet never be found any other than I ought to be?" I commend to such spirits, Jesus the Christ of God, for there is nothing in his precepts or his practices, in his profession or his life, that is not consonant with righteousness of the highest order, majestic in its compass, and scrupulously minute in its obedience.

The yoke of Christ is framed in our interest. The law of Christ is drawn up and dictated by our Councillor for our welfare. If man were infinitely wise, and could draw up a code for himself, which would involve no hardship, and entail all that was happy, he could devise no regulations more healthful, more profitable, or more pleasant than those of the Saviour; he would discover that to believe in Jesus was the highest wisdom; to repent of sin, the most delightful necessity; to follow after holiness the most blissful pursuit, and to serve God the greatest delight. Service and sovereignty blend here, as when Joseph became Prime Minister of Pharaoh he was lord over all the land of Egypt. To serve God in very truth is to reign, and to become a servant of Christ, is to be made a king and a priest unto God—to be ennobled with as much dignity as human nature can bear. Jesus Christ, if he forbids you anything, only forbids you what would harm you. Say any of you of sin—"'Tis sweet"? Ah! and so are many poisoned things. Your nature goes after it. Yes, and many a sick man's nature craves for that which would be his poison. The Lord Jesus denies to those who take his yoke nothing but that which would be injurious to them. His is a blessed yoke, because it is the yoke of righteousness, and it is the yoke of personal benefit.

Moreover, Christ's yoke is not exacting. If he assesses us with one

hand, he more richly endows us with the other hand. He in his grace always gives to us of his bounty what he asks of us as our duty. Under one view of divine truth, faith is man's act. The Holy Ghost never believes for anybody. A sinner must believe himself. It is a personal act. But yet in another phase of it, it is the Holy Spirit's work in the man—he gives the faith which the man exercises towards God. If then faith in Jesus be required, it is not a hard thing, because the Spirit works in men the very faith which Jesus seeks of them. If to repent of sin be thought difficult—how shall we get tears out of a rock? —the reply is, true repentance is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and when it is sought of the Lord, it is never denied. Christ is exalted on high to give not only the pardon of sin, but to give the repentance which comes before the pardon. To give repentance and remission of sins is the very office of Christ. If, then, the precepts should seem difficult, the difficulty is removed, because the virtues and graces which are a matter of precept are also a matter of promise. What is commanded in one Scripture, is conceded in another as an absolute gift of God according to the covenant of his grace. It is an easy yoke, then, sinner. Dost thou say: "I cannot believe"? Hast thou asked for faith? Is thy heart hard? Hast thou asked to have it softened? If ye cannot come to Christ with broken hearts, come *for* broken hearts, for they are his gift. He will give you all—all that his gospel demands, for he is Alpha and Omega, the author and the finisher of our faith. It is an easy yoke, then, since he gives what he requires.

That the yoke of Christ is easy, I might call to witness all those who have ever proved it. Never did a man wear it but he always loved to wear it. I think I have heard that Queen Elizabeth carried the crown in the procession of her sister Mary at the coronation, and she remarked that it was very heavy; but some one standing by told her it would not be heavy when she had to wear it herself. So the precepts which some men do but carry in their hands seem very heavy; but when a man comes to know Christ and to love him, those very precepts become light and easy. "I could not," says one, "be a Christian as I am: it would be very hurtful to me: I should have to give up much that I have learned to prize." Ah! but suppose you were made a new man in Christ Jesus, there would be nothing irksome at all about renouncing old habits. Here is a raven, to tutor it into cleanly living, it must forego all carrion, it must feed upon these grains sweet and pure. The raven might pine and repine at this as a hardship, unless by some transmuting influence the raven were turned into a dove. Then it would be no hardship to forsake the carrion, which its new nature would loathe; nor would it be grievous to feed upon the clean winnowed grain, for its appetite would crave it. And, O beloved, the life of the true Christian is not a life chafed and galled with vexatious prohibitions, because pursuits which, to the non-Christian heart are distasteful and repulsive, to the renewed heart are a matter of intense delight. A man shall carry a bucket of water on his head and be very tired with the burden, but that same man when he dives into the sea shall have a thousand buckets on his head without perceiving their weight, because he is in the element and it entirely surrounds him. The duties of holiness are very irksome to men who are not in the

element of holiness; but when once those men are cast into the element of grace, then they bear ten times more and feel no weight, but are refreshed thereby with joy unspeakable. Christ's yoke is easy, for the new heart rejoices in it.

The yoke of Christ is rendered easy by the bright example of Christ, and by the blessed fellowship with him to which his people are called. Christ himself carried it. Have you never read in Grecian story—I think there are one or two cases to the point—how the Grecian soldiers on their long marches grew exceedingly weary, and wished that the war were closed: they felt so dispirited. But there was a man whom they almost adored as a god—Alexander himself—and they saw him always sharing their toil. If the road was rough, the monarch walked with them: if they were short of a draught of water, Alexander would share their thirst. At the sight of him every man grew strong. Oh! it is grand to the believer to feel that, if there be a trial or a difficulty in the Christian life, Christ has borne it, and Christ is with us, bearing it still. Not like the scribes and Pharisees, who laid heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon men's shoulders, and they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers; our Lord has taken the load himself and carried it, and he now says to the disciples, "Take my yoke upon you—the very yoke I carried—and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: I have borne the trial which you have to bear and endured to the end, as you shall do through my grace."

There is one remarkable fact about the yoke of Christ which I should like to mention. All who have borne it have always had grace given equal to the weight of the burden. I have never yet discovered one cross-bearer among the children of God who ever expressed regret that he became a Christian and took upon himself the yoke. I have been familiar with death-beds: I have witnessed strange scenes, for the bony hand of death pulls back many curtains and plucks off many masks from faces that were accustomed to wear them. One thing, however, I can solemnly say I have never seen. I have never seen a Christian weary of his Master's service. I have never heard from an aged pilgrim a word of complaint against Christ, or against his yoke. There have been a great many Christians beyond all suspicion of fanaticism, of whom none would suppose that they strove to act a part inconsistent with their true character, yet not one has had to regret that he served Christ. You know the words so often quoted of him who regretted that he had not served his God with half the zeal that he had served his king; but I never remember, nor do any of you ever remember having heard of one who, in life's latest hour, bemoaned his allegiance to God, or bewailed the ardour with which he followed Christ. Surely, if remorse had ever begotten such a thought, some one would have been bold to utter it. And, verily, verily, if such an incident had ever occurred, there would have been no lack of historians to record it.

Another thing I think tells strongly in favour of this yoke of Christ. The servants of Christ are always anxious to get their children into the same service. Often do I hear men say, "I don't want to bring my boy up to my trade; the work is dirty, the hours long, and the pay

small." I have heard them say, "I should not like to see my boy in our office; there are so many temptations," and so on. Did you ever hear a pious man say, "I should not like my boy to be a Christian"? Did you ever hear a godly matron say, "I should deeply regret to see my daughter become a follower of Christ"? No, but what they have possessed for themselves they have longed to have for their children. I remember well hearing my grandfather's earnest prayer for all his household. It always lay near his heart that his children and his children's children might fear the Lord. I have lively recollections of his devotions. My father, whose prayer you heard just now—how often have I heard him pray for his children; and I can truly say the prayer that is nearest to my heart is for my sons, that they may serve the Lord. There is nothing I desire so much beneath the skies. Now if Christ's yoke were hard, we could not wish to bring our children under it. We have natural affections and common sense as well as you, and having tried Christ so long ourselves, that is our desire for our posterity. I have tried him now (what shall I say?) these twenty years. Had I found him a hard master I would not beguile you or belie my own conscience. I speak the truth, there is no lord like Christ, and no service like Christ's. I would that every young man and every young woman here believed in his name and submitted to his authority, and that they would take upon themselves, through his grace, his easy peace-giving yoke.

III. If not, what then? THOSE WHO REFUSE TO WEAR THE EASY YOKE OF CHRIST WILL HAVE TO WEAR A WORSE ONE. "Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron."

Observe! Adam wore an easy yoke in Paradise: he broke it. Himself and his posterity have had to wear yokes of iron ever since. Death has come into the world with all its train of woes. I need not enlarge, enough that it is a case in point. Whenever a child of God, a true child of God, under pressure of temptation, turns aside from the right path, he is always made to feel that after he has broken the yoke of wood, he must wear a yoke of iron. John Bunyan's illustration will serve me well here. The two pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, when they went on their way, came to a place where the road was full of flints that cut their feet, and there were thorns and briers in the way; and by-and-by one of them said, "Here is a meadow on the other side of the hedge, and if we were just to pass through the gap we might save a corner: it would be sure to come out in the way again, and so we should be certain to avoid the rough places." Bunyan well describes how, when they got into By-path Meadow the night overtook them and the flood, and they wished to find the road again—longing for it, rough as it had been. But Giant Despair laid hold of them, took them to his dungeon, and beat them within an inch of their lives, and it was only by mighty grace that they escaped. Take care, Christian, take care! though you shall not utterly perish, you may often have to go with broken bones through a sin. David—ah, you recollect his sin, his repentance, and his life of sorrow—how he went to his grave halting still, as a consequence, an entail of his crimes. Do not, therefore, shrink from Christian duty because it is onerous. Never, O Christian, turn aside from the straight road, the highway of rectitude, because it

threatens you with shame or loss. That first loss will be vastly less than the after-losses you will incur by seeking to avoid it. Jonah would resist the word of the Lord that came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh," but he had to endure the perils of a voyage, to encounter the fury of the tempest, and at length to sink to the bottom of the sea, and yet to Nineveh after all he must go. If you shirk a duty you will be brought up to it yet, but it will be with bitter pain. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

The principle of our text is very applicable to all backsliders. We have known men that set out apparently on the road to heaven—made a profession of being Christians, but after awhile they tired and fainted, and walked no more with us. Christianity was to them a yoke, and they put it off. I wonder whether they have improved their condition. I believe not. I will single out a person here—may his conscience single him out. When you lived in the country, every Sabbath you went with your wife and family to the house of God. Were you a Methodist then? Never mind: you were very earnest, whatever place it was you attended. And you and your little family were very happy too. But you came to London, and after awhile the general idle habits of our London people in the morning came over you. You were content with one service a day. You did not seek Church-membership, nor cast yourself in the way of God's people. By-and-by it was not one service a day you attended, it was none at all; or else you called it religion to go and hear the music and see the religious theatricals in certain great houses in London. I know not if you called that worshipping God when you were only whiling away the hour with sensual gratifications. And at last you gave up all pretence of being a Christian or of frequenting places of worship. Now I will ask you a question. You have got rid of the yoke of wood: how about your shoulders now? Your Sundays, are they very pleasant? Your family, is it very happy? Your mind, is it very much at ease? Oh, no! I know while I am talking to you you wish yourself back in the little village again listening to the minister's voice once more; for your Sundays are distasteful and comfortless, and your week days, when you think about your condition, are wretched and reproachful, and your children are not growing up in the way you could wish. Ah, sir! I pray God to make that yoke of iron very heavy to you. Do you long to get rid of that and come back and take the yoke of wood again? God of his infinite mercy, bring you back if you are his child, or if you are not of his family may he put you among his children and teach you to walk worthily.

We have known those who have backslidden in another way. Here you are now. Perhaps you used to be a professor of religion, but the little shop was situated in a neighbourhood where a good deal of trade was done on Sunday; you heard it said by the neighbours: "I do not know how it is you can shut up as you do." The wife did not like it, nor the husband either: it was, however, done by slow degrees, and now it is always done, and you cannot both come together: there is only one can come, and the other must stop at home. Well, you have given up Christ's yoke; and Sabbath keeping seems to be too hard a thing for you. Are you better off? Are you

really better off? Are you happier? Are you really happier? Something in your soul answers my question; you know you have a yoke of iron now, instead of a yoke of wood. May God help you to break away from your present slavery; and may you become a true heir of heaven.

It may be, I have here before me, one who was led into backsliding by a very common occurrence. Young woman, I knew you once, when your face was radiant with happiness, while we preached Christ, and sung the hymns of Zion, but you married, and your marriage was not in the Lord. An unbelieving husband was your choice. You thought the yoke of Christ was hard when we reminded you of the precept, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." You rejected the yoke of Christ. How have you found it since? I have seen a great many such marriages, and I have only seen one—I *have* seen one, it is fair to say that, but I assert I never saw but one—in which I could get anything like an acknowledgement of happiness from the ill-assorted pair. Here and there it has happened perhaps, that God has forgiven the fault, but not seldom it leads to alienation of heart, and to utter departure from the living God, and often too, to disappointment and heart-breaking, and to wretchedness such as I shall not attempt to describe. Those that break Christ's yoke and become backsliders, shall find an iron yoke given in its stead.

To take another class of illustrations. There are those in the world who will not have the yoke of Christ in the matter of religion—they prefer another. For instance, there are superstitious persons who are not satisfied with the Bible, they want tradition. They are not content with the teaching of the ancient church of Christ, as we find it in the Acts of the Apostles, but they hanker after those modern upstart churches, that call themselves catholic and apostolic, and amuse themselves by raking up the grotesque fashions of the middle ages. What is the consequence? Do these perverts, who cast off the yoke of the true Christian religion, get an easier yoke? Ask them. Their penances and their mortifications; their fast days and their festivals; their comminations, and their celebrations—oh, what do they get for them all? Is there one of them who can say he is saved? It is usually one of their cardinal doctrines, that no man can know he is saved, so that the only position they get in this life, is to slave on with a dim hope and to die with a grim rite, and according to one faith to go—even if it were the best man in the church—to go to purgatory. Ah, cheerless prospect! If I were a Roman Catholic, I should turn a heretic, in sheer desperation, because I would rather go to heaven than go to purgatory. I cannot see any advantage that is offered to a man: if he gets all he can get, it is not worth having. Who among you would slave his life away in voluntary humiliations, buoyed up with the cheering faith of purgatorial fires at the goal of your days? Where is the gain of it? And there is no church under heaven, except the true church of Christ, that says to men, "Believe, and live: lay hold on Christ, and you are saved." We present to you in Christ's name the greatest boon beneath the sky, and other churches dare not pretend to offer it. They will only tell you that you may get into a state in which you may be saved perhaps, but they do not know quite

certainly: it may be you shall fall away and perish after all, but as to an absolute certain salvation in perpetuity, received by an act of faith, they know not what it is. They put upon themselves a yoke of iron grievous to their necks.

And look at self-righteous men and women who try to work their own way to heaven. The Pharisees of old—what a slavery their life was! Any man who is seeking to be saved by his good works makes himself a slave. He must know in his conscience that his good works are imperfect, and therefore he has no title, no sure, clear title to heaven. Only the man who takes Christ to be his wisdom, his righteousness, his justification, his redemption, his all and in all—knows that he is saved; but he that getteth Christ hath all that God asks of him, he hath his sins punished in his Saviour, he hath had the law fulfilled by his Saviour, and he is thus saved. Those who will not have Christ, put upon their necks a horrible yoke. Oh, beware of superstition; beware of self-righteousness! These are iron yokes indeed.

But what remonstrance shall I address to the unbeliever, who says: "I shall believe nothing: I am a sceptic. I will not bow my neck to revelation"? Well, sir, you will be sure before long to bow your neck to some tremendous absurdity. If you can once get a sceptic to tell you what he does believe, you will generally find that his credulity is on a par with his infidelity. What he relishes he feeds on without question; what he dislikes he rejects, because somebody shrugged his shoulders at it. I have sometimes tried to muddle my way through chapters of German neology. Thank God I have felt this is not the way of life, or else certainly I should never find it, though I had a doctor of divinity on either side to assist me. It is too hard and difficult for any intellects, except they happen to be of the German type, to be able to find a way through its labyrinths, and they miss it I am afraid. The men who do not believe in God, believe that this world was not made at all, but grew. If you were to sow some mustard and cress in your garden, in the form of the initials of your boy, and it came up as A or B, and you took him into the garden and said: "Now, nobody ever sowed that seed; it grew there in that way," you could not make him believe it. But these philosophical speculators believe that this big world, and sun, and moon, and stars, came forth without a creator. They can believe anything. You cannot convince the simplest boy in the street that somehow or other he was developed from an oyster, or some creature inferior to that, and yet these profound thinkers bow themselves down to such a belief as this. Verily, it is fulfilled in these days as of old, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. He that will not believe the simple revelation of God, will presently find himself committed to systematic misbeliefs, which distract reason, oppress the heart, and trammel the conscience. He wears a yoke of iron instead of a yoke of wood.

Still giving but a word to each case, we have hearers who, when they listen to the word, are haunted with reproach, but never softened with repentance, because of their sins. They go on hardening their necks and persevering in their iniquities. Impenitent sinner, mark this word. The day will come when inasmuch as thou hast rejected the easy yoke of repentance, thou wilt have to bear the iron yoke of

remorse. A man under remorse in this world is a dreadful sight. Horrified with the past and alarmed with the future, yet having knees so stubborn that they will not bow, and blood-shot eyes that will not weep; because, alas! his heart is like to adamant that cannot feel. Of all the pangs convinced and repentant sinners bear, there are none so dreadful as the gloomy torment of remorse. I could unfold scenes that I have witnessed with my own eyes, paint the visage, and repeat the expressions of men dying in fell despair, but I will spare you. God grant that you may never have to endure that foretaste of hell upon earth, for such it is.

And what shall I say to the lover of pleasure? There are those who say, "I shall not bear the yoke of Christ: I shall live in pleasure." Pleasure in some instances means lust, and gaiety means crime. Have you never seen the young man who was respectably brought up in his youth, after leading a life of pleasure shivering at your door in rags? One I knew whom I had often clothed; I supposed that he was dead. But I saw him return loathsome in his filthiness, squalid and tremulous, he came begging yet again, stranger still to virtue and to shame. The poor soul still lives—a life more like death than life—a prodigal whom none can help because he does not return unto himself, nor desire to return unto his Father. London dens have in them many hapless profligates that are terrible warnings that men who seek their own pleasure put upon themselves a yoke of iron.

Oh, what revelations the infirmaries of our hospitals, and the wards of our lunatic asylums might disclose of men who have played the wanton and rioted in sin, and have worse than a yoke of iron upon their necks now! Oh, if there should have come into this house some fallen woman, about whose neck there is that yoke of iron, that she rejected a mother's precepts and disdained a father's counsel—sister, that yoke of iron from thy neck may yet be taken; but beware lest it grow heavier still! There are those who would help thee escape from thy sin in the Christian church. Arise, and flee from this evil that hath made thee captive, for there is hope yet. The Christ of God is willing to receive the foulest of the foul. Persevere not in your criminal course, or that yoke of iron will grow heavier and heavier and heavier, and be riveted to thee, till at last thou shalt perish in it—perish, and that for ever.

All unholy persons who break the law of God, and break away from the gospel's holiness, in the long run get a yoke of iron about their necks. There are those in this place, perhaps, who once used to sit with us at the Lord's table, having made a profession of religion, but they gave way to drink. I know that if they could break away from that habit now they would. If it could be done with a resolution they would do it at once, for somehow they love this house, and slink in still; and when they pass me in the streets, half-ashamed, they still remember him for whom they yet retain a love, and who retains a love for them, and would fain see them back again. But ah! ye drunkards, when ye once fall into this sin, how seldom are ye restored! May God help you! May the eternal God deliver you; for this, this iron yoke, is often hard to break. Resolve now, and pray also in God's name that you may be free. Have done with the accursed thing. God can enable you to come clear of it. May he do so now!

Another form of the same evil not often spoken of, but quite as bad, is that of avarice. We have known those who professed to be Christians, who succeeded in business and from that time they grew greedy. The gold they had stuck to their fingers, burned into their flesh, yea, into their very souls and turned their hearts to steel. They have no pity now for the poor, and little care for the church of God. Ah, sirs; what an iron yoke avarice puts upon a man's neck! You see a man grown old still keep scraping, yearning still for more, afraid that he shall lose what he has, trembling in the night lest the burglars should make a forcible entrance, and fearing we know not what. His heart is in his iron safe, and is as hard as the iron of which it is made. O God, forgive! for the covetous man can no more enter heaven than the drunkard. The covetous have no place in the kingdom of God. There is a mark set upon the covetous man. Covetousness is idolatry. It is a heavy burden—the burden of avarice. Happy they who wear the yoke of Christ, for all their givings are a delight, and what they sacrifice is no loss to them, but becomes true storing—the laying up of treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.

Enough of this. The general principle running through every case is, that he who rejects the yoke of Christ bows his neck to something worse by far. Mark ye! The day cometh—I know not how soon—perhaps as here I stand and rudely talk of these mysterious things. Soon may this hand be stretched, and dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering strain. Ere this service is over, the sight of the Son of Man may be seen in the clouds of heaven, and the trumpet may ring out loud as that of Sinai of old, "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment. And ye living sinners, come ye also; for the great white throne is set." And in that day the yoke of Christ will be a chain of gold about each believer's neck. To have served Christ will be our honour and our delight; but ah, the sin that once was pleasure—how it will turn to misery! How the rod of your joy will become a serpent and seek to devour you! How will you flee away from yourselves, and that which ye courted and ye loved, to ask the hills to hide you, and the rocks to engulf you, that you may not see the face of the Redeemer. Come to him now, ere yet that last tremendous day dawns. I lift him up to you now. Whosoever looks to Christ shall live. Jesus the Son of God has died, and he that trusts him shall not die. There is life in a look at the crucified One. Pardon and peace come at once to the soul that trusts the Saviour. May ye now trust him, ere ye leave this house, and God shall have the glory of it, both now and evermore. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH'S DAWN AND ITS CLOUDS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 28TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."—Mark ix. 24.

LAST Sabbath morning we treated upon the way by which faith comes to the soul. "Faith cometh by hearing." It is our joyful persuasion that on the past Sabbath faith actually came to many, and they were enabled to rest themselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ to their soul's salvation. Now, every good shepherd knows that he ought to look very carefully after the newborn lambs, and, therefore, it seemed to me that it would be most expedient this morning to search after those who have just believed in Christ, and to endeavour to strengthen and help them against the very serious trials which are incident to their present weak condition. When a man first lays hold upon Jesus he is very apt to be in distress, if his joy be not always at its full height; he is untrained in spiritual conflict, and easily dismayed; the tremor of his former conviction is upon him, and he is prone to relapse into it. The light which he has received fills him with intense delight, but it is not very clear and abiding; he sees men as trees walking, and is ready to conjure up a thousand fears. The weakness of newborn faith, therefore, calls for the compassion of all who love the souls of men. In addition to their own weakness they are liable to special dangers, for at such times Satan is frequently very active. No king will willingly lose his subjects, and the Prince of Darkness labours to bring back those who have just escaped over the confines of his dominion. If souls are never tried afterwards, they are pretty sure to be assailed on their outset from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Bunyan very wisely placed the Slough of Despond at the very commencement of the spiritual journey. The cowardly fiend of hell assails the weak, because he would put an end to them before they get strong enough to do mischief to his kingdom. Like Pharaoh, he would destroy the little ones. He seeks, if possible, to beat out of them every comfortable hope, so that their trembling faith may utterly perish. Perhaps, the text of this morning will be

suitable to many here. I trust it may, and that the Spirit of God will give us reflections upon it which shall come home comfortably to all troubled souls. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

In the text there are three things very clearly. Here is *true faith;* here is *grievous unbelief*; here is *a battle between the two.*

I. Very clearly in the text there is TRUE FAITH. "Lord, I believe," says the anxious father. When our Lord tells him that, if he can believe, all things are possible to him, he makes no demur, asks for no pause, wishes to hear no more evidence, but cries at once, "Lord, I believe." Now, observe we have called this faith true faith, and we will prove it to have been so. First, it was faith *in the person of Christ.* It is a great mistake to fancy that to endorse sound doctrine is the same thing as possessing saving faith, for while saving faith accepts the truth of God, it mainly concerns itself with the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and its essence lies in reliance upon Jesus himself. I am not saved because I believe the Scriptures, or because I believe the doctrines of grace, but I am saved if I believe Christ; or, in other words, trust in him. Jesus is my creed. He is the truth. In the highest sense the Lord Jesus is the Word of God. To know him is life eternal. By his knowledge he justifies many. I do not know that the father in the narrative before us had heard many sermons. I am not sure that he had very clear notions about everything that concerned the Saviour's kingdom: it was not essential that he should have in order to obtain a cure for his son. It was a very desirable thing that he should be an instructed disciple, but in the emergency before us the main thing was that he should believe Christ to be both able and willing to cast the devil out of his son. Up to that point he did believe; and, though his faith may have been deficient as well in breadth as in depth, yet it enabled him to realise that the Messiah who stood before him was the Lord, and it led him to place all his reliance upon him. He did not believe in the disciples; he had once trusted them and failed. He did not believe in himself; he knew his own impotence to drive out the evil spirit from his child. He believed no longer in any medicines or men, for doubtless he had spent much on physicians; but he believed the man of the shining countenance who had just come down from the mountain. When he heard him say, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth," he at once said, "Lord, I believe." Beloved hearer, I hope that thou hast come, at some time or other—perhaps it is since last Sabbath day—to put thy trust in Jesus in the same way, believing him to be able and willing to save thee. This is the faith that will effectually save thee. Dost thou rest in him, in him thy God, thy brother, thy Saviour; in him as living among the sons of men; in him as bleeding and suffering, as a substitutionary sacrifice, in thy stead; in him as risen from the dead no more to die; in him as sitting at the right hand of the Father, clothed with power to save? Dost thou trust him? If not, whatever thou believest, and however orthodox thy creed, thou art short of eternal life; but, if all thy trust is stayed in him, if thou bringest all thy help from him, if his wounds are thine only shelter, his blood thine only plea, himself thine only confidence, then art thou a saved man, thy transgressions are forgiven thee for his name's sake, thou art

accepted in the Beloved. Rejoice with fulness of joy, for thou hast a right so to do, since every gladsome thing is thine.

The faith of this good man was true and saving for another reason. It was personal faith *about the matter in hand*, faith about the case which he was pleading. Have you never found it to be wonderfully easy to believe for other people? I know when I was seeking the Saviour, I had no doubt about his receiving any other penitent. I felt certain that if the vilest sinner out of hell had come to him, he was able to save him: and though I had no faith in him on my own account, yet had I met with another distressed soul in a similar condition to myself, I believe I should have encouraged him to put his trust in Jesus, though I was afraid to do so myself. To believe for others is an easy matter, but when it comes to your own case, to believe that sins like yours can be blotted out, that you, who have so badly played the prodigal, may be received by your loving Father, that your spiritual diseases can be cured, and that the devil can be cast out of you;—here is the labour, here is the difficulty. But, beloved, we must believe this or else we have not saving faith. O my Saviour, shall I trifle in faith by believing or pretending to believe that thou canst heal a case parallel to mine, and yet cannot heal mine? Shall I draw a line and limit thee, thou Holy One of Israel, and say, "Thou canst save up to me, but not so far as I have gone"? Shall I dream that thy precious blood has some power, but not power enough to blot out my sins? Shall I dare, in the arrogance of my despair, to set a boundary to the merits of thy plea, and to the virtue of thine atoning sacrifice? God forbid. Jesus is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him,—he is able to save *me*. Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out; I come to him, and he will not, cannot cast me out. Hast thou a personal faith, a faith about thyself, about thine own sins, and thine own condition before God? Dost thou believe that Christ can save *thee*? Sink or swim, dost thou cast thyself upon him, thine own proper self? He, his own self, bore our sins in his own body on the tree; and we, our own selves, must cast ourselves upon him. If we have so done, then we, like the man in the narrative, have the real faith, the faith of God's elect.

Lest any, however, should think this a very small thing, let me go on to show you that this man's faith was real, because it was *faith which triumphed over difficulties*, difficulties which typify our own, and hence it was clearly the work of the Spirit of God, for no other will endure the trial. I shall ask thee, dear hearer, whether faith has triumphed over difficulties in thy case. For observe, his child was grievously tormented, and the malady was of *long standing*. When the Saviour said to him, "How long hath this happened unto him?" he said, "Of a child." Must it not have seemed, now that his son had grown older, a very unlikely thing that he should be recovered. We expect our children to outgrow some of their complaints; but here was one who, after many years, was none the better. Years had only increased but not diminished his pains. Yet in the teeth of that the man believed that Christ could cast that long-established demon out of his son. Dear friend, thy case of sin is similar. The sins of thy youth rise up before thee now: are they not in thy bones? The sins of thine

early manhood, and the sins of thy riper years, and, mayhap, the sins of thy decaying years; all these come up before thee. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. Can I, after lying asoak in the scarlet dye till it is ingrained in my very nature,—can I be washed and made whiter than snow? Crimes so long continued, evil habits so deeply rooted, can all these be overcome? O soul, if thou hast true faith, thou wilt say, "Yes," I believe that since Christ is God he can deliver me from all evil, and forgive me all sin. Even if I had lived as long as Methuselah, and had continued all that while in the vilest of transgression, yet Jesus is so mighty to save that he could deliver me in a moment. His word is, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Looking to those dear wounds, those founts of love and blood, I do believe, and will believe, that all my years of sin are gone as in a moment, and like thick clouds before a mighty wind are blown away never to return. Oh, this is faith, poor soul. I pray God enable thee to exercise it.

This man had for a long time considered his son's case to be *hopeless*. Well he might. In addition to the fact that the child was subject to attacks of epilepsy and to extreme fits of fury, he was deaf and dumb, so that no intelligent expression of feeling could come from him: if at any time he felt stronger and better, he could not give his father a word of hope, he could not utter his gratitude for the sympathetic care that watched over him, neither could he hear any word of consolation which his father addressed to him. The ear was closed and the tongue was bound. Painful affliction, exceedingly painful to the parent, and to be continued year after year! At last the father must have felt there was no use in making any further effort. The child must be controlled, but he could not be restored; he was a hopeless maniac. Peradventure, there is one here, this morning, who had grown hopeless of salvation; he has felt as if his case was one out of the catalogue of mercy; he has written bitter things against himself, and supposed that God has sealed those bitter things and made them true; but you see the father in the presence of Christ believed over the head of his despair, "in hope believing against hope," and I pray that you may do the same. In the presence of Christ the man's confidence came back to him. Hast thou, my hearer, a hope that can do the same? I never could have believed it was possible for me to be delivered from my sins till now I see that he who came to save me is my Maker; he who came to redeem me is he who bears the earth's huge pillars on his shoulders and sustaineth all things by the word of his power. With him nothing can be impossible. I see his pierced hands and feet, and feel that if he stooped to suffer in the sinner's stead, the merit of his sacrifice must be beyond conception great. In Jesus the hopeless one hath hope, he who had despaired else now bids his heart be of good cheer. Oh, that is true faith which will not suffer itself to be any longer the slave of doubt and despondency now that it sees Jesus the Lord drawing near. It is a mighty faith which refuses to sit any longer in the valley of the shadow of death, but arises and shakes itself from the dust, and puts on its beautiful garments.

The father had another trial for his faith in the fact that he had just

then *tried the disciples*. He brought his child to Christ, and Christ being absent, he asked the apostles who were in the valley what they could do. They tried their best, but having lost their Master's power they utterly failed; and this must have been a very violent trial to the father's confidence. He knew that on other occasions Christ's power had passed through the apostles, and he had wrought his miracles by them; but here was a complete cessation of their healing energy. If Jesus did not choose to work by them on this occasion, the suggestion would arise in the man's heart, "Perhaps his own power also has become lessened." But he put the thought aside, and believed notwithstanding all. And, O soul, hast thou tried ministers and tried God's people, and hoped to get comfort, and hast thou found none? Hast thou gone to the ordinances and found them like dry wells? Hast thou resorted to the hearing of the gospel and found even it to be barrenness to thy spirit? Yes, yet suffer no shadow of suspicion to cross thy mind as to the Lord's ability or willingness to save thee. Come to the feet of Jesus and still believe in him. Whatever reason may say in thy soul to excite thee to despondency on account of past defeats, believe thou firmly that his power is still invincible; his arm is not shortened that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. It was meet that thou shouldst see the failure of man that thou mightest glorify the grace of God; it was meet that the servants should be unable that the Master's ability might be the more conspicuous. May the Lord help thee to believe that though no man can do thee good, though all the pastors and bishops of the church, and all the martyrs and confessors of past ages, and all the apostles, and all the prophets, are unable to find a balm in Gilead that can meet thy case, yet there is a hand, a pierced hand, which can heal thy wounds and bleed a balm into thy soul which shall effectually restore thee. Yes, true faith believes over even such a discouragement as this.

I would have you notice, also, once more, while we are upon this point, that this father believed in Christ and his power to save, though *the child was at that very moment passing through a horrible stage of pain and misery*. The spirit which possessed this poor child was accustomed to throw him sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water. Just our condition; for our spirit has sometimes been thrown into the very fire of presumption, and at another season into the floods of despair. We have alternated between the cold of melancholy and the heat of self-conceit. We have at one time cried, "I love pleasure, and after it I will go;" and at another time we have said, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life; I would not live always." When Satan is in a man, and he is full of despair, he goes to all extremes, and resteth nowhere, walking like the unclean spirit himself through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. At the moment while the father was speaking, the poor boy was on the ground wallowing in dreadful paroxysms of his disorder, foaming at the mouth, and gnashing with his teeth. Satan had great wrath, because he knew that his time was short. When the Saviour spoke, and bade the devil come out of him, the fiercest struggle of all took place; for the unclean spirit rent the child, and the most terrible cries were heard. Still the father said, "Lord, I believe." Now, it may be, dear hearer, you are this

morning yourself full of great trouble, vexed and tormented with innumerable fears of wrath to come; a little hell burns within your soul, anguish unutterable has taken hold upon you, your heart is like a battle field torn by contending hosts, which rush hither and thither, destroying on every side. You are yourself an embodied agony; you are like David when he said, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow." Can you now believe? Will you now accept the word of the Most High? If thou canst, thou wilt greatly glorify God, and thou wilt bring to thyself much blessedness. Happy is that man who can not only believe when the waves softly ripple to the music of peace, but continues to trust in him who is almighty to save when the hurricane is let loose in its fury, and the Atlantic breakers follow each other, eager to swallow up the barque of the mariner. Surely Christ Jesus is fit to be believed at all times, for, like the pole star, he abides in his faithfulness, let storms rage as they may. He is always divine, always omnipotent to succour, always overflowing with loving-kindness, ready and willing to receive sinners, even the very chief of them. Sorrowful one, do not add to thy sorrows by unbelief, that is a bitterness which it is superfluous to mingle with thy cup. Better far is it to say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him."

There must be power unbounded in him who deigned to die upon the cross. Come ye to Calvary and see! Can you look to that head crowned with thorns, and mark the ruby drops standing on his brow, and yet be doubtful of his power to save? Can you mark that sacred face, more marred than that of any man—marred with our griefs and stained with our sins, can you gaze on it and remain an unbeliever? Survey that precious body tortured in every part for our transgressions, and can you yet distrust him upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid? Can you behold those hands and feet fastened to the ignominious wood for the guilty? Can you look upon that spectacle of woe, and know that Christ is divine, and yet harbour doubts as to his power to save you? As for myself, I am constrained to cry, "Lord, I believe, I must believe; thou hast thyself compelled my faith." Let all things reel beneath my feet, but the cross of my Lord stands fast. If the Son of God has died for sinners, it is certain that the believing sinner cannot die, but must be saved, since Jesus bled for him. May God grant to every one of us to stand just there where the poor father did as to his faith, and say as he did, "Lord, I believe."

I am forced to leave this head incomplete, for the hour commands me to hasten on. The faith before us was earnest, it led the man to tears of repentance, it taught him to pray, it led him to open confession; in all these points may your faith be of a like character.

II. But, now, we must turn to the second part of the subject, for HERE IS UNBELIEF. "Help thou mine unbelief," said he. He had doubted the power of Christ, he had said, "If thou canst do anything for us, have compassion on us and heal us;" but yet he had faith and he had avowed it; he had not kept it secret within himself as though he were ashamed of it; before the scoffing scribes he had confessed, "Lord, I believe." He avowed it, too, with remarkable earnestness, for he said it with tears, as though his heart saturated his confession, running over at his eyes to bedew the words, "Lord, I do

believe; do not doubt it, I lie not; I do believe in thee." But, then, he went on to make the confession that at the same time there was an unbelief lingering in his soul. "Help thou," said he, "mine unbelief." Albeit that his faith had triumphed over the considerations which I just now mentioned, which appeared enough to damp, if not to quench it, yet these considerations may have had some effect upon his mind: they did not prevent his believing, but they hampered his faith with many questions. Some unbelief lingered, though faith was supreme. Learn from this that a measure of doubt is consistent with saving faith; that weak faith is true faith, and a trembling faith will save the soul. If thou believest, even though thou be compelled to say, "Help thou mine unbelief," yet that faith makes thee whole, and thou art justified before God.

I thought I would, under this second head, mention some reflections which often cause unbelief to trouble the heart which, nevertheless, has been enabled by the Holy Spirit to believe.

First, there are many true believers who at the first are tried with unbelief, because they have now, more than ever they had before, *a sense of their past sins.* Many a man receives a far deeper sense of sin after he is forgiven than he ever had before. The light of the law is but moonlight compared with the light of the gospel, which is the light of the sun. Love makes sin to become exceeding sinful.

"My sins, my sins, my Saviour!
How sad on thee they fall;
Seen through thy gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.

I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on thee."

The light of the promise gleaming in the soul reveals the infinite abyss of horror which lies in indwelling sin. In the light of God's countenance we discover the filthiness, the abomination, the detestable ingratitude of our past conduct. We loathe ourselves in our own sight. While we bless God that sin is pardoned, we are staggered to think it should have been such sin as it is, and the natural feeling resulting from our discovery is a fear that we cannot be pardoned. We ask ourselves, can it be that such sins are forgiven? Possibly the memory of certain peculiarly heinous sins becomes very vivid to our conscience: we had half forgotten them, but they start up with dreadful energy, and cast suspicions into our mind as to whether forgiveness is possible. Oh, that we could blot out those evil days! We have said, "Cursed be the sun that it rose on such a day as that in which I so defiled myself with iniquity." Thus, under a sense of sin, though there is the belief that we are pardoned, there may also arise the unbelief against which we need the Lord to help us.

Some have been staggered, at times, by *a consciousness of their present feebleness.* "Yes," saith one, "I trust the past is blotted out, but then how can I hope that I am saved? What a poor creature I am. I try to pray, but it is not worth calling prayer. I go up to God's house vowing

that I will praise his name, and I get talking on the way and forget all about it, and I am dull all through the service. Then I was tempted yesterday, and I spoke unadvisably with my lips, or I did not defend the cause of my Lord and Master against that sceptic as I ought to have done. Only, just lately, I hoped that I had found peace with God, and yet I am behaving like this. Why I must be a hypocrite, it cannot be that I am a saved soul. Surely if my sins were forgiven me I should act very differently from this." Now that is often the cause of unbelief. The soul still hopes in Jesus and rests in him, and she has nowhere else to go; but for all that the old monster unbelief gives her a desperate twitch, and she trembles while she hopes.

Some others have been made to shiver with unbelief on account of *fears for the future.* "I am afraid I shall not hold on," says one. "Why, to be a Christian you must persevere to the end. With such a heart as mine, how can I hope to be steadfast: and in such a position as mine, surrounded by so many ungodly associates, how can I hope to persevere? I see so-and-so made a profession, and he is gone back; and I know such an one who said he was a Christian, and he is a worse man than he used to be. Suppose the last end of me should be worse than the first; suppose I should put my hand to the plough and should look back and prove unworthy of the kingdom." Poor heart, it forgets that word, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" and remembers not that other word, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Rightly filled with a holy anxiety to hold on to the end, it gives way to improper unbelief, for it ought to rest confident that Jesus changeth not; and, where he has begun the good work, he will carry it on and perfect it unto the day of Christ.

I have known some, again, whose unbelief has been excited by *a consideration of the freeness and greatness of the mercy bestowed.* I recollect how this staggered me once. I had believed in Jesus, and rejoiced in his salvation, but in meditating upon divine grace I was overcome with fear. What, pardoned, justified, a child of God, an heir of heaven, a joint heir with Christ, one of God's elect, secure of heaven, with a crown waiting for me at the last, and power to win that crown daily secured to me;—why, it seemed altogether too good to be true. Unbelief whispered, "it cannot be." If such great grace had been shown to others I should not have marvelled. If men of great abilities, of high station, and of eminent character, had received such grace, I could have believed it; or even if that holy woman, who had so long been a patient sufferer, had been so blessed, it would have appeared an ordinary circumstance; but for such a sinner as I was to be thus favoured appeared to be too strange a miracle of love. I do remember how the very grandeur of the divine mercy threatened to crush me down and bury

me under its own mass of goodness. I could believe that the Lord would give me a little mercy, but that he should give me such mercy, such unexpected favour, almost exceeded belief. And yet, what folly is there in such ideas, for were we not told beforehand that "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts"? Do we not know that we are dealing with a great God, of whom the prophet asks, "Who is a God like unto thee, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin"? Do we think that God will only give according to our stinted measure? Is God to take man for his model? Remember ye that word, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think." Instead of the greatness of the divine mercy staggering us, it ought to console us and assist us to believe, seeing that it is so congruous with his nature. Yet, ofttimes, on this sea of love poor leaky vessels have begun to sink.

I have known, too, not a few, whose unbelief has arisen through *a sacred anxiety to be right*—a most proper anxiety if not pushed beyond its sphere. The idea has been suggested to them: "Suppose I should be after all presumptuous, and should deceive myself, by thinking I am saved, whereas I am not? What if I should film the wound, when it ought to be lanced, before there can be effectual healing." How I wish that all hypocrites would be troubled with this sort of fear. It would be a great mercy for many boastful professors if they had grace enough to doubt. I think Cowper was right when he said—

> "He that never doubted of his state,
> He may, perhaps he may too late."

But yet, this anxiety may be carried too far, and the soul may slide into despondency through it. I ought to be afraid of presumption, but it cannot be presumptuous to believe God's word. I ought to be afraid of saying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace"; but if peace comes to me through the word of Christ, I need never be suspicious of it, let it be as profound as it may. I may doubt myself; I may go further, I may despair of self, but I must not doubt the Lord. If he has said, "Trust in me, believe in me, and thou shalt be saved;" if I believe in him, it is no presumption to know that I am saved. If he has declared that he that believeth in him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses; if I have believed in him, I am justified from all my sins. There is far more presumption in doubting the Lord than there ever can be in trusting him. Faith is no more than God's due, it ought never to be looked at as too daring. If I believe in Jesus I have no right to say, "I hope I am saved," for that implies a doubt of God's declaration that the believer is saved. I have no right to say, "I sometimes think I am safe." I *am* so undoubtedly if I believe in Jesus. It is no matter of opinion, but a

matter of certainty. There is nothing in this world about which a man may be so sure as about his own salvation, because other things come to us by the evidence of our own fallible senses, or by the testimony of men who may be mistaken; but the fact that the believer is saved is sealed to us by the testimony of God himself, who cannot lie. When the Scripture says plainly, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," I, having believed, and having been baptised, ought not to question the divine declaration, but should be as sure that, if I have believed, I am saved, as I am sure that I exist. This assurance is attainable, and should be the common condition of the believer. Yet has it often happened, I say, that an anxiety, which was commendable in its outset, has ended in a censurable unbelief.

Once more, I have known unbelief arise in some souls through *a most proper reverence for Christ, and a high esteem for all that belongs to him.* You remember our text a few Sabbath mornings ago told us of John, who when he saw his Master in all his glory fell at his feet as dead. Ah, when the soul gets near to Jesus it perceives his perfection, and becomes conscious of its own imperfection; it sees his glory, and becomes aware of its own nothingness; it sees his love, and blushes at its own unloveliness; and then it is very, very apt to be tortured with mistrust, though it ought not so to be.

And I have even known when children of God just converted have come into the church, they have had such a high esteem for their brethren and sisters, that they have feared to be numbered with them. When they have heard some earnest brother pray they have said, "Oh, what a prayer, I shall never be like that man;" and, perhaps, they have listened to the preachings of some servant of God and said, "Ah, I cannot come up to that standard; the very existence of such a man as that condemns me." It is beautiful so see the little children loving the elder sons of the family, and admiring what they see of the father in them; but even this holy modesty may be turned into unbelief, though it ought not so to be; for, O child of God, if Christ be so lovely, thou art on the way to be made like him; and if there be anything beautiful in any of his people, that same shall be given unto thee, for they also are as thou art, men of like passions with thyself; and God who has done great things for them will do the like for thee, for he loves thee with the self-same love.

I have thus set before you the unbelief which often will exist side by side with faith.

III. Now, let us notice very briefly THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO.

It is observable that this poor man did not say, "Lord, I believe, but have some doubts," and mention it as if it were a mere matter of common intelligence which did not grieve him. Oh, no; he said it with tears; he made a sorrowful confession of it. It was not the mere

statement of a fact, but it was the acknowledgment of a fault. With tears he said, "Lord, I believe," and then acknowledged his unbelief. Learn then, dear hearer, always to look at unbelief in Christ in the light of a fault. Never say, "This is my infirmity," but say, "This is my sin." There has been too much in the Church of God of regarding unbelief as though it were a calamity commanding sympathy, rather than a fault demanding censure as well. I am not to say to myself, "I am unbelieving, and therefore I am to be pitied." No, "I am unbelieving, and therefore I must blame myself for it." Why should I disbelieve my God? How dare I doubt him who cannot lie? How can I mistrust the faithful promiser who has added to his promise his oath, and over and above his promise and his oath has given his own blood as a seal, that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. Chide yourselves, ye doubters. Doubts are among the worst enemies of your souls. Do not entertain them. Do not treat them as though they were poor forlorn travellers to be hospitably entertained, but as rogues and vagabonds to be chased from thy door. Fight them, slay them, and pray God to help thee to kill them, and bury them, and not even to leave a bone or a piece of a bone of a doubt above ground. Doubting and unbelief are to be abhorred, and to be confessed with tears as sins before God. We need pardon for doubting as much as for blasphemy. We ought no more to excuse doubting than lying, for doubting slanders God and makes him a liar.

Then, again, having made a confession of his unbelief as you observe, the father, in the narrative, prayed against it, and an earnest prayer it was. It was, "Help thou mine unbelief." It is very noticeable that he does not say, "Lord, I believe; help thou my child." No, nor does he say, "Lord, I believe; now cast the devil out of my boy:" not at all; he perceives that his own unbelief was harder to overcome than the devil, and that to heal him of his spiritual disease was a more needful work, than even to heal his child of the sad malady under which he laboured. This is the point to arrive at, to feel that there is no deficiency in the merit of Christ; no lack of power in his precious blood; no unwillingness in Christ's heart to save me; but all the hindrance lies in my unbelief. There is the point. O God, bring thy power to bear where it is wanted. It is not because the blood will not cleanse me, it is because I will not believe; it is not because Christ's plea is not heard, but because I do not trust that plea. If I am not in the possession of full salvation, it is not because Christ is not mighty to save, but because I do not lean on him fully and entirely. O God, thou seest this is the centre of the difficulty, bring thy power to bear on that difficulty. I ask only this. No more do I cry, "Help me here, or help me there;" but, "Help mine unbelief.",

That is the Slough of Despond; I carry that in my heart; that is the weak point. "Lord, strengthen me just there." It is well when, in addition to confession, we bring up all the great guns of fervent prayer to bear upon that position which needs to be carried by storm.

And, lastly, this man did well in looking for the help against his unbelief to the right quarter. He did not say, "Lord, I believe; and now I will try to overcome my belief." No; but "*Lord* help," as if he felt that the Lord alone could do it. No physician can cure unbelief but Christ. He is the physic for it, and he is the physician too. If thou hast any unbelief, take thou the blood of Christ to cure it with. Think of him,—God in the glory of his person, tabernacling among men, working out a perfect righteousness, dying a felon's death upon the cross in the sinner's stead; think of him as rising from the dead, no more to die: think of him as ascending into heaven amidst the shouts of angels: think of him as standing at the right hand of God with the keys of death and hell at his girdle: think of him as always pleading the merit of his blood before the Father's throne; and, as thou considerest concerning him, in the power of the Spirit, thine unbelief will die, for thou wilt say, "Lord, the thought of thee has helped mine unbelief; while I have been studying thee, and feeding my soul on thee, and making thee to be as bread and wine to my soul, my unbelief has gone. I do believe in thee, and I will; for thou hast helped mine unbelief." Go, any of you who are in trouble about this matter, go where you gained your first faith, go there to get more. If you first obtained your faith at the cross foot, go there again to end your unbelief. View the flowing of his soul-redeeming blood, and continue viewing it till thou shalt by divine assurance know that he has made thy peace with God. God bless thee in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Mark ix. 1—37.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 4TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God: From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."—HEBREWS x. 11—14.

WE shall have this morning to repeat a truth which has sounded forth from this pulpit many hundreds of times; but we shall offer no apology for our repetitions, seeing that the truth to be preached is one which cannot too often be proclaimed. If you lift up your eyes at night to the stars what a wonderful variety of celestial scenery is there! The astronomer can turn his telescope first to one quarter of the heavens, and then to another, and find an endless change in the sublimities which meet his gaze. Such are the doctrines of the gospel; they are full of variety, and beauty, and glory: but yet in the heavens one or two conspicuous constellations are more often regarded by the human eye than all the rest put together. The mariner looks for the Great Bear, the pointers, and the pole star; or, if he should cross the equator, he gazes on the southern cross. Though these stars have been often looked upon, it is never thought to be superfluous that practical men should still observe them. Night by night they have their watchers; for by them ten thousand sails are steered. I should suppose that in those days, now happily past, when slavery reigned in the Southern States of America, the Negro if he desired liberty for his boy would be sure, whatever else of the stars he did not teach him, to point out to him the star of liberty. "Know well, my child, those friendly stars which point to the lone star of liberty. Follow that light till it leads you to a land where fetters no longer clank on human limbs." Even so it seems to me that certain doctrines, and especially the doctrines of atonement and justification by faith, are like these guiding stars; and we ought frequently to point them out, make sure that our children know them, and that all who listen to us, whatever else they may be mistaken about, are clear about these, the guides of men to the haven of freedom and eternal rest. I believe if I should preach

to you the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ every Sabbath-day, and that twice, and nothing else, my ministry would not be unprofitable, perhaps it might be more profitable than it is; so we are coming to the same truth which we handled last Sabbath evening. Many dishes are put upon the table at intervals, but bread and salt are always placed there; and so we will have the atonement again, and again, and again; for this is the bread and salt of the gospel feast.

I purpose, this morning, to handle the text thus. First, we will *read, mark, and learn it*; and then, secondly, we will ask God's grace that we may *inwardly digest it.*

I. Come, then, first of all to THE READING, MARKING, AND LEARNING OF IT; and you will observe that in it there are three things very clearly stated. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus, our great High Priest, is set forth first by way of *contrast;* then its *character* is described; and, then, thirdly, its *consequences* are mentioned. Briefly upon each.

First, it is set forth by way of *contrast*— contrast with that ancient dispensation which was of divine origin, which conveyed much blessing to Israel, and which had the divine approval resting upon it. In that old dispensation, the first point mentioned in the text is, that there were many priests. "For every priest standeth" — implying that there were several. There were many priests at the same time—the sacrifices of the temple were too numerous to have been all of them performed by one man: all the descendants of Aaron were set apart to this work, and even then they required the aid of the Levites in certain inferior duties. And as there were many priests at one time, so there were many in succession. As a priest died, he was succeeded by his sons. By reason of infirmity, they were not able to continue in their office even through the whole of their lifetime; there was a certain period at which they were commanded to surrender their office to younger men. By reason of mortality the priesthood was perpetually changing; one high priest died, and was succeeded by another. Now the reason for the existence of many priests was this, that no one priest had accomplished the work of expiation. The good man has gone to his fathers and offered up the last of the morning lambs— but the morning lambs must still be offered The high priest is dead, and there shall be no more opportunity for him to enter into that which is within the veil, but there must be a new high priest appointed, for the work is not finished. There were many priests, and as one generation passed away, another inherited the mitre. Now, herein is the glory of Christ that he is but one, and to this our attention is called by the apostle; that whereas there were many priests, and the sacrifices were hereby proved to be incomplete, since others had to take up the work; here is but one priest for ever, and he has finished his work, and therefore sits down at the right hand of God.

In further contrast, we observe that as there were many priests, so there were many sacrifices for sins. The sacrifice was offered once, but sin was not put away, and therefore had to be offered again. The great day of atonement came every year, wherein sin was afresh brought to remembrance. There was a day of atonement last year, but the people are unforgiven, and there must be a day of atonement this year; and when that day is over and the priest has come forth in his holy and

beautiful apparel, with the breastplate gleaming in the light of God, Israel may rejoice for awhile, but there is one thought that will sadden her; there must be an atonement day next year, for sin still remaineth upon Israel, notwithstanding all that the house of Aaron can do by all their sacrifices. Yea, and moreover, remembrance of sin was of necessity made every day. There was the lamb for the morning, the innocent victim was slaughtered and burned; but the morning sacrifice did not put away the day's sin, for as the sun began to descend in the west another victim must be brought, and so on each morning and each night, victim, victim, victim, sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice, because the expiation was always incomplete. But our blessed Lord, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," was sacrificed but once, and that one sacrifice hath completed his expiatory work. In very truth his was a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than theirs.

Follow the contrast a little further, and observe the Apostle's assertion that the repeated sacrifices of the law could never take away sin. Those must have been strangely blind who thought they could. How could the blood of bulls and of goats put away sin? What conceivable connection can there be, except in symbol, between the death pangs of a beast and the sin of a man before God? The principle of substitution was by the legal sacrifices clearly set forth, but that was all; those offerings did not and could not provide the actual substitute. The principle of vicarious sacrifice they plainly unfolded, but they provided no real sin-offering. How could they? Where but in the Christ of God could a propitiation be found? Where else is there one who could in our nature make recompense to the injured law of God?

You will observe, dear brethren, that the words used in the text are these, "Can never take away sin." The word is, "Can never strip off sin." As if our sins were like filthy garments—the vestures of our disgrace—these could not be taken from us by the daily ministering of priests. There was no power in their sacrifices to remove the polluted coverings. Yet the priests were very diligent, for "every priest standeth" in the posture of activity, and they were persevering too, for "every priest standeth daily." They were obedient too, for they did not offer sacrifices according to their own devices, but, as the text saith, "the same sacrifices"—that is to say, such as were ordained of God. The priests were both diligent, constant, and obedient, and the principle of the truth was in their offerings—viz., the doctrine of substitution; yet sin still remained upon the consciences of the offerers, and none of them were made perfect.

Mark well one inference from this. If the sacrifices which were presented reverently and perpetually, according to God's own command, and were presented by men about whose priesthood there could be no manner of question—for they had received it indisputably of the Lord—if these offerings were of no service to the taking away of sin, it is clear enough that the offerings of so-called priests in these modern times cannot have any efficacy. Here is a priesthood, certainly appointed of God, offering victims ordained by divine order, and yet their service does not put away sin. How much less, then, can it be wise to trust in doubtful priests, who present sacrifices unwarranted by the word of

God. Their descent cannot be proved, their title is a forgery, their pretentions of one sect are ridiculed by another, they are all alike deceivers; have done with them and rest alone in Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our profession.

If Jerusalem has no sacrifice in all her flocks, what use can it be to look to Rome? If Aaron's seed cannot put away sin, to what end shall we look to the shavelings of Antichrist?

Following the apostle's words, we come to *the character* of our Lord's sacrifice, and we perceive, in reading, that his priesthood was personal, and entirely within himself. There is but one true atoning priest. The twelfth verse says, "this man." The word "man" is not in the original; it is "this," "this priest," if you will; "this man," if you please; but its vagueness may make us think that the apostle scarcely knew what to say. You see the stars and the moon in their brightness, but suddenly they are all eclipsed and lost in a superior light. What can this glory be which has paled their fires? It is the sun rising in his strength. So, while we are beholding the priesthood of Aaron with all its excellence, it suddenly ceases to shine, because of the glory which excelleth, the radiant presence of one, for whom, like heaven's manna, it is not easy to find one fully descriptive name. Shall we call him "man"? Blessed be his name; he is so, our near kinsman, the "Son of Man." Shall we call him "priest"? He is so. Blessed be his name; he is the true Melchisedec. Shall we call him "God"? Well may we do so, for he counts it not robbery to be equal with God. But this one divinely mysterious person—this unique and solitary high-priest, accomplishes what the many priests of Aaron's race could not compass. They were weak, but he is all-sufficient. He has wrought out eternal redemption, and made an end of sin.

Note well, that none stand with him at the altar; none is appointed to aid him, neither before him nor after him is there one to share his office. He is without father, without mother, without predecessor, and without successor. He stands alone and by himself, this glorious one who looked and there was no man, and therefore his own arm brought salvation; he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him. Jesus, the sole sacrificing priest of our profession, has completed what the long line of the Levitical priesthood must have left for ever incomplete.

And we are told further, by the apostle, that as there was but one priest, so there was only one sacrifice. He "offered one sacrifice for sins." He himself was the sacrifice; his body the altar, himself the priest, himself also the victim. On Calvary's tree he presented himself a substitute for human guilt, and there he bore the crushing weight of Jehovah's wrath in his own body, on the behalf of all his people. On him their sins were laid, and he was numbered with the transgressors; and there he, in their stead, suffered what was due to the righteousness of God, and made atonement to divine justice for the sins of his people. This was done, not by many offerings, but by one sacrifice, and that one alone. Jesus offered no other sacrifice: he had never made one before, nor since, nor will he present another sacrifice in the future. His sin-offering is one.

The text adds further that, as there was but one sacrifice, so it was

but once offered for ever; or, as the tenth verse puts it, "Once for all." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." There is in the Scriptures no such idea as that of Christ perpetually offering himself; it is a childish invention of superstition. We are expressly told that he offered himself "*once*." Under the law the lamb was offered many times, the same sacrifices were repeated; but our Lord exclaimed, "It is finished," and concluded all his sacrificing works. He "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever." I do not know how your Bibles happen to be marked as to the comma in the passage; mine, now before me, reads thus:—"After he had offered one sacrifice for sin for ever, sat down;" but that which I use at home is marked in the other way—"After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down." We do not quite know where the comma should be; some of the best scholars maintain that it should be joined to the preceding words, others that it belongs to the succeeding. It does not involve any point of doctrine; and it may be read whichever way you please, without error. I think, however, the preponderating testimony is in favour of its being read, "he offered one sacrifice for sins for ever;" at any rate those words express a great and precious truth. Look back as far as you can, there was no sacrifice for sins, except the "lamb slain from before the foundation of the world;" look on as far as you will, till this present dispensation shall have completed its circle, and men shall have passed the judgment-seat, and you shall find no atonement for sin except this one—it stands alone, shining as a lone star, or a solitary rock in the midst of a raging sea. The propitiation which God has set forth was and ever must be one. The Lord Jesus offered himself once, once only, once only for ever: there is no other atoning priest, no other sacrifice, and there is no repetition of that one sacrifice.

Now we go on to notice *the results* of Christ's one offering, which are, in the text, described as threefold—towards *himself*, his *enemies*, and his *people*.

Towards *himself:* After he had offered one sacrifice for sins he for ever sat down at the right hand of God. Every priest, under the old dispensation, stood; but this man sat down, and the posture is very instructive. The typical priests stood because there was work to do; still must they present their sacrifices; but our Lord sits down because there is no more sacrificial work to do; atonement is complete, he has finished his task. There were no seats in the tabernacle. Observe the Levitical descriptions and you will see that there were no resting-places for the priests in the holy place. Not only were none allowed to sit, but there was nothing whatever to sit upon. According to the rabbis, the king might sit in the holy places, and, perhaps, David did sit there; if so, he was a striking type of Christ sitting as king. A priest never sat in the tabernacle, he was under a dispensation which did not afford rest, and was not intended to give it, a covenant of works which gives the soul no repose. Jesus sits in the holy of holies, and herein we see that his work is finished.

There is more teaching in the passage. He "sat down;" this shows that he took possession of the holy place. Under the law, when the priest had done his work, what did he do? He went home. Neither the temple nor the tabernacle was his home. If you had asked a priest,

'Where dwellest thou?" he would have said, "amongst the tribe of Levi yonder I have my abode." But this man, when he had finished his work, sat down in the holy place, because he was at home, not a servant only but a son, yea, and Lord of the whole house; and, therefore, he took his own seat therein by right. It is a joyful truth that he did this representatively, to show us that while the law gave no permanent possession, and could not establish the seed of Israel in possession of sacred privileges, the gospel gives us an abiding place amongst the children of God, who dwell in his house for ever.

The apostle tells us where this seat of Christ was. He says, he "sat down at the right hand of God." This indicates the highest glory possible; our poet calls it

"The highest place that heaven affords."

There was no nobler position, or Jesus should have had it. Note the remark of this same apostle in the first chapter of this epistle: "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, sit thou at my right hand?" Angels do not sit at the right hand of God; they are constantly in the place of service, and therefore they stand ready to fly on their Master's commands; but Jesus sits in the highest seat as Lord over his own house, clothed with honour and dignity, enthroned in the place of favour at the right hand of God. Sitting there he is to be viewed as clothed with everlasting power, "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins;" no more the "despised and rejected, the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" no more in weakness and dishonour taken out to die; he sits as a king upon his throne, distributing royal bounties, coequal with Jehovah himself. As King of kings, Jesus Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Father. So much with regard to the result of the Redeemer's passion in reference to himself.

Now, observe carefully the result of his offering with regard to *his enemies*. He sits there "expecting till they be made his footstool." They are crushed already; sin which is the sting of death has been removed, and the law which was the strength of sin has been satisfied. Sin being put away by Christ's death, he has effectually broken the jaw-teeth of all his enemies. When Jesus Christ offered himself unto God he fulfilled that ancient promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Christ has set his foot upon the old dragon's head, and crushed out his power. Still, however, a feeble fight is kept up; feeble, I say, for so it is to Christ, though to us it seems vigorous. Sin and Satan within us, and all Christ's enemies without us, including death itself, are vainly raging against the Christ of God, for every day they are being put beneath his feet; every day as the battle rages the victory turns unto the enthroned Christ. In us I trust sin has been put beneath Christ's feet; in thousands of others it shall yet be so. Jesus upon the throne expects the growth of that victory till all his enemies shall be utterly and ignominiously beaten. "O long expected day, begin!" Father, fulfil thy Son's expectations, for thy saints expect it in him. Let the time come when every enemy shall be beneath his feet.

We will not tarry, however, on that, but close this exposition of the words of the text by noticing the effect of Christ's death upon *his own people*. We are informed that he hath "perfected" them. What a glorious word! Those for whom Christ has died were perfected by his death. It does not mean that he made them perfect in character, so that they are no longer sinners, but that he made those for whom he died perfectly free from the guilt of sin. When Christ took their sins upon himself, sin remained no longer upon them, for it could not be in two places at one and the same time; if it was on Christ it was not upon them; they were acquitted at the bar of God when Christ was, on their behalf, "numbered with the transgressors." When Jesus suffered the penalty due to his people's sins to the last jot and tittle, then their sins ceased to be, and the covenant was fulfilled: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more for ever." There was a clean sweep made of sin: "He hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin;" and that for all his people. They want no other washing, no further purging, as far as pardon of sin and acceptance with God in the matter of justification are concerned, for they are all perfected by his sacrifice.

His people are described in the text as "them that are sanctified," and you must beware of misunderstanding that word as though it meant those who are made perfectly holy in character. The word implies an inward work of grace, but it means a great deal more. The passage should be read "He hath perfected for ever them that are being sanctified," for it is in the present in the Greek. The text is not to be made to say that those who are perfectly sanctified are perfected, that would be a common-place, self-evident truth; but the great high priest perfected for ever those who are being sanctified. Now, sanctification means, primarily, the setting apart of a people by God to be holy to himself. Election is sanctification virtually; all God's people were sanctified—set apart and made holy to the Lord—in the eternal purpose and sovereign decree or ever the earth was. Christ has by his death perfected all who were sanctified or set apart in election. This purpose of sanctification is carried out further when those set apart are called out by grace. When effectual grace separates men from the world by conversion and regeneration, then they become, in another sense, the sanctified; they are set apart even as Christ set apart himself, dedicated to God's service, and separated from sinners. As the work which began at regeneration is continued and carried on in them, they are in another aspect sanctified; they are realising in themselves that sanctification or dedication to God, which was theirs from before the foundation of the world. The text relates not only to those in heaven who are perfectly sanctified, but it relates to all who were set apart in the purposes of grace, that as far as their pardon and justification are concerned, Christ perfected them for ever when he offered up himself without spot unto God.

II. We have thus studied the interpretation of the words, reading, marking, and learning them. Now, I ask your earnest attention while we try to DIGEST THESE TRUTHS. It is in the digestion that the real nutriment shall come to our hearts.

All ye who desire eternal life lend me your ears, for this matter concerns you—observe that the whole business of this passage concerns

sinners. The verse speaks about the Jewish priests who offered sacrifices for sins, and then it further speaks concerning Christ Jesus who has put away sin. O ye guilty, the gospel is meant for you. If there be any of you who are innocent and pure, and without spot, for you I have no words of consolation; but oh, ye sinners, the gospel is for you, for you the priesthood and the substitution of Jesus, for you his death on earth, for you his reign and power in heaven. This fact ought to encourage every trembling conscience. Are any of you saying, "Ah, I shall never be saved, I am so guilty"? Believe not that lie of Satan. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." The gospel has for its special aim and intent the putting away of sin, and therefore it is suitable to your case.

Hearken then further to me. See in the text the position out of which you should labour to escape. It is the position of those who stand daily ministering and daily offering sacrifices which can never put away sin. You are seeking mercy and I know what you are doing; you are going about to establish a righteousness of your own. You thought, "I will pray very regularly,"—you have done so for months, but prayers can never put away sin. What is there in prayer itself that can have merit in it to make atonement for sin? You have read the Scriptures regularly, for which I am most glad, but this you always ought to have done, and if you now do it most commendably, in what way will that put away sin? "Ah, but I have been a regular attendant at a place of worship." It is well you should, for "faith cometh by hearing;" but I see no connection between the mere fact of your sitting in a place of worship and the putting away of sin; you know it has not eased your conscience yet, but has even increased your sense of sin. Perhaps some of you have for years been trying to save yourselves, and you have got no further; you feel as if you were further off than ever you were. "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which profiteth not?" Why stand you daily at the altar offering that which can never put away sin? It would be infinitely wiser to flee to the sacrifice which can atone.

Now, follow on the text, and, oh, may it come into your very soul, for its practical teaching is that the one sole object of faith for the pardon of sin, is the man, the priest, Christ Jesus. "This man," says the Apostle, "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever." If thou wouldst have peace of heart, thou must get it only from this one glorious person, the Christ of God. I tell thee solemnly, thou wilt damn thyself by thy prayers, and thy tears, and thy repentings, and thy church goings, and thy chapel goings, as easily as by blasphemy and fornication, if thou trustest in them; for if thou makest a Saviour and an idol of thy best works, they are accursed. Though thine idol be of purest gold, it is as much an abomination unto the living God as if thou hadst made it of filth. There must be no looking anywhere but to Jesus, not in any measure or degree. He who looks partly to Jesus, and partly to himself, looks not to Christ at all. If a man shall put one foot upon the land and the other on the sea—the foot that is on the land will not avail him, he must certainly fall, because his other standing place is weak. If a chain be made strong enough to bear huge weights

in every portion except one link, yet as we all know its strength is not to be measured by the stronger portions, but by the weak link; and if you have one weak link in your hope, if you are resting in anything you are or hope to be, or can do or feel, that one weak link will snap and ruin you for ever.

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

From top to bottom, from foundation to pinnacle, our hopes must be in the work of Jesus, and we must trust in him alone, or else we shall build in vain. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." Other hope beneath the skies there is none. O soul, learn the uselessness of looking to anything but Christ; but, be thou assured of this, if thou wilt look to him, and to him alone, he will put away thy sin, nay, he has done it by the sacrifice of himself.

Furthermore, here is another thought—I would that you would drink it in as Gideon's fleece drank in the dew—it is this: the efficacy of the atonement of Christ for sin is as great to-day as ever it was. He "offered one sacrifice for sins," for what? for a thousand years? No! But the text says "*for ever!*"—for ever!

"The dying thief rejoiced to see,
That fountain in his day,
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood,
Shall never loose its power;
Till all the ransomed church of God,
Be saved to sin no more."

"One sacrifice for sins for ever." The devil tells you it is of no use for you to believe in Christ, there is not efficacy for you, you have sinned away your day of grace; tell him he is a liar, Christ has offered one sacrifice for sins *for ever;* and while a man lives beneath the covenant of mercy, where the gospel is sounded in his ears, there is efficacy in the atonement for ever. The atoning sacrifice has no limit in its merit, the salvation of some has not drained it of even the smallest degree of its power. As the sunlight, though it be seen by millions of eyes, is as bright as ever it was, so is it with Jesus. Perhaps the sun's fires may grow dull, and become dimmed in the course of ages, but it is certain that the eternal fount of mercy, the Sun of Righteousness, will never fail. He will continue to flood his people with the golden sunlight of his forgiving grace. He has made one sacrifice for sins for ever. I will come to him then. He is able to save me—he is able to save me even though I were a sinner of seventy years of age. I will come to him, I will rest in him—in him alone. Oh, believe me, if you do this you have eternal life abiding in you.

A further thought. The text leads me to say to you that it is utterly hopeless, if you desire salvation, for you to expect Jesus Christ to do anything more than he has already done. Many are waiting for a something, and they scarce know what. Now Jesus, when he died and went to heaven, perfected for ever all his work; and if you do not

believe to-day in what he has done, there will be no surer grounds for belief to-morrow. If faith be difficult to me to-day, I must not expect that I shall have any more evidence, or that there will be any more truth for me to rely upon, if I live another twenty years. God has set forth Christ for you as guilty sinners to rest on; and if that is not enough for you, what more would you have? Christ has offered himself, and died and suffered in our stead, and gone into his glory; and, if you cannot depend upon him, what more would you have him do? Shall he come and die again? You have rejected him once; you would reject him though he died twice. But that cannot be done; there is enough in his sacrifice to answer all the purposes of mercy, and if you sin wilfully by rejecting him, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation." This is the point; all the atonement that could save me in ten years' time is here now; all that I can ever rely upon if I postpone all thoughts of faith, all is here already. There will be no improvement in Christ. He has perfected his work. Oh, poor troubled soul, rest thou on him now. While I put these words, as it were, into your mouths, how I wish I could put them into your hearts! How foolish you are who are looking for signs and wonders or else you will not believe. May the Spirit of God show you that Jesus is now able and willing to save you, and that all you have to do is to take what he has done, and simply trust him, and you shall be saved this morning, completely saved, perfected through his one sacrifice. There remaineth no more to be done by the Redeemer. He sits down, and he will not rise for any further sacrifice. He has finished his atonement and perfected those he means to save; and if you believe not in him, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

Yet, again, I want you, dearly beloved brethren, to gather from the text before us the true posture of every believer in Christ. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down." If I am a believer that is my posture, if you are a believer that is yours,—you are to sit down. Under the law there was no sitting down. Even at the passover the Israelites stood with their loins girt and their staves in their hands. There was no sitting down. It is only at the gospel supper that our proper posture is that of recumbency, reclining, or sitting down, because our warfare is accomplished. They that have believed have entered into rest. Jesus hath given us rest, we are not traversing the wilderness, we are come unto mount Zion, unto the glorious assembly of the church of the first born whose names are written in heaven. Our justifying work is finished, finished by Christ. Sit down Christian, sit down and rest in thy Lord. There is much to be done as to fighting your sins, much to be done for Christ in the world; but so far as justification and forgiveness are concerned, rest is your proper place, peace in Christ Jesus your lawful portion.

Your position is also to be one of expectancy. Christ, when he sits down, expects his enemies to be made his footstool. Expect, O believer, the time when you shall be rid of all sin. Fight manfully against your inbred corruptions, struggle against sin as you see it in the outside world, and expect every day with holy faith that you shall get the victory. As Christ sits there expecting, he hath raised

us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in himself; and we will sit there and look down upon this erring world, and expect the time when all evil shall be beneath our feet as it is beneath his.

Meanwhile, our posture is, once again, that of those who are perfected in Christ Jesus. How I wish that we could all realise this, and live in the power of it. If I am, indeed, a believer, I have nothing whatever to do in order to put away the guilt of my sins. I have much to do by faith to overcome the power of sin in me, and to seek after holiness; but so far as the guilt of transgression is concerned, Jesus Christ's one offering hath perfected all his people, there is not a sin remaining upon them, nor a trace of sin; they are "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" before God's sight they are perfectly lovely; they are not somewhat beautiful, but they are altogether lovely in Christ; they are accepted not in part but altogether, "accepted in the Beloved." When I get upon this strain, words are quite inadequate to express the emotions of my soul. This truth might well make David dance before the ark of the Lord—to think that though black in ourselves, we are comely in Christ; though like the smoke-dried tents of Kedar we are foul, yet clothed in our Saviour's beauties we are like the curtains of Solomon for glory. The glory of the text is that we are perfected *for ever;* not for to-morrow, and then suffered to fall from grace; not for the next twenty years, and then turned out of the covenant; but he hath perfected "*for ever*" those that are set apart. It is a work which abides like the worker himself, and while Christ sits on the throne his people cannot die; while his work remains for ever perfect, they are also for ever perfect in him.

Now, brethren, another practical point is this, that it becomes us to make the evidence of our interest in this gracious work more and more clear to others. The text says, "Hath perfected them that are sanctified," or set apart as holy unto God. We must be more and more set apart every day, we must labour after holiness; this must be our object, not in order that we may be saved, for we are saved already, but in order that by others it may be clearly seen that we are saved, and they seeing our good works may glorify our Father which is in heaven. If I have in myself no measure of holiness, how shall I be recognised as belonging to Christ? Is it not foolish presumption to say "I am perfect in Christ," if still my soul lives in sin, and loves it? May the Lord, by his Spirit, lead us in the ways of holiness, and then, walking in the light as he is in the light, we shall have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son shall cleanse us from all sin.

Finally, brethren, it remains for us to recollect that Christ will be one of two things to every one of us here present: either we shall see him at the right hand of God and rejoice that he is lifted so high, or else we shall behold him there with horror as we writhe beneath his feet. For his people, perfected for ever, it is their heaven to think that Christ is highly exalted. Oh, would we not exalt him if we could! Is there anything in this world that we would keep back from him? Is there any suffering from which we would shrink if we could lift him high? I hope I can speak for all of God's people and say, the dearest object

of our life is to honour him. Oh for high thrones for Jesus and bright crowns for Jesus!

> "Let him be crowned with majesty
> Who bowed his head to death!
> And be his honours sounded high
> By all things that have breath!"

Let him have the highest place that heaven can yield him.

But, if we will not believe his Godhead, if we will not trust him as the Mediator, if we have no part in his sacrifice, if we oppose his gospel, if we reject his claims to our obedience, there is another position we shall have to take up, and that is, beneath his feet. Those feet will be heavy indeed! They were pierced once; but if ever those pierced feet come upon you, they will crush you to powder. Nothing is so terrible as love when once it is turned to anger. Oil is soft, but how it burns. Inflame love into jealousy and it is cruel as the grave. Beware, ye that reject the Saviour, for in the day when he cometh he will smite you with a rod of iron, and even his face, which is full of tenderness to-day, shall then be full of terror, and this shall be your cry, "Hide us ye mountains, ye rocks conceal us, from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." What a wonderful mixture of words, "The wrath of the Lamb." It is one of the most dreadful expressions in Scripture. The Lord grant we may never feel its terrible meaning. May his blood cleanse us. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE REAL PRESENCE, THE GREAT WANT OF THE CHURCH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 11TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please."—Solomon's Song iii. 4, 5.

Is it necessary to say that the Lord Jesus Christ is no longer corporeally present in his church? It ought not to be needful to assert so evident a truth; and yet it is important to do so, since there are some who teach that in what they are pleased to call "the Holy Sacrament" Christ is actually present in his flesh and blood. Such persons unwittingly deny the real humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, for if he has indeed assumed our humanity, and is in all points made like unto his brethren, his flesh and blood cannot be in two places at one time. Our bodily humanity could not be present in more places than one at one time, and if Christ's humanity be like ours it cannot be in an unlimited number of places at once; in fact, it can only be in one place. Where that place is we know from Scripture, for he sitteth at the right hand of God, expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. Unless you are to suppose that the humanity of Christ is something altogether different from ours, it cannot be here and there and everywhere; but to suppose that it is a different humanity from ours is to deny that he is incarnate in our nature. Our Lord Jesus told his disciples that he would go away, and he has gone away. He ascended into heaven, bearing humanity up to the throne of God. "He is not here, for he is risen."

Remember, also, that because the Lord Jesus is absent corporeally, the Holy Spirit the Comforter is with us, for he especially said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Those who believe that Christ's flesh and blood are or can be present on earth, deny the presence of the Holy Spirit; for the Scripture is plain enough upon that point—that the bodily absence of

our Lord is the cause and condition of the presence of the Comforter. If Jesus dwells still corporeally upon the earth, then the Spirit of God is not upon the earth. Many other most serious errors follow from the supposition that the humanity of the Redeemer is present anywhere except at the right hand of God, even the Father; yet it is an imagination which lies at the basis of the sacramental system, and thousands are greatly enamoured of it.

No word of mine this morning is intended to have the remotest connection with any sacramental presence of the corporeal nature of our Lord; our mind has a far other matter before it. Let us, therefore, having guarded ourselves so as not to be misunderstood, proceed to speak of another presence of our blessed Lord. The fact is, that Christ Jesus, the Lord, is present in his church by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is this day the representative of Christ in the midst of the church, and it is in the power and the energy of the Holy Ghost that Christ is with us always, and will be even to the end of the world. As God, Jesus is everywhere; as man, he is only in heaven; as God and man in one person, Mediator and Head of the Church, he is present with us by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, whom the Father has sent in his name. It is by the working of the Spirit of God that Christ's presence in the church is manifested; and we are to expect no other presence than that: we have the spiritual divine presence of the second person of the blessed Trinity, and the presence of Christ Jesus also in the power of his representative on earth, the Holy Ghost. This presence, not a bodily but a spiritual presence, is the glory of the church of God. When she is without it she is shorn of her strength; when she possesses it all good things ensue. Brethren, if a church be without the Spirit of God in it, it may have a name to live, but it is dead, and, you know, that after death there follows corruption, corruption which breeds foulness and disease. Hence, those churches which have turned aside unto error, have not only lost all power to do good, but they have become obnoxious and the causes of great evil in the midst of the world. If any professing church abides not in Christ it is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and while it is decaying, it is injurious, and there is need for the world's welfare that it be utterly destroyed. We must have Christ in the church, or the body which was meant to be the medium of the greatest good becomes the source of the grossest evil. Let the Spirit of God be in the church, then there is power given to all her ministries; whether they be ministries of public testimony in the preaching of the word, or ministries of holy love amongst the brethren, or ministries of individual earnestness to the outside world, they will all be clothed with energy, in the fulness of the power of the Lord Jesus. Then her ordinances become truly profitable, then baptism is burial with the Lord, and the sacred supper is a feast of love; then the communion of the brethren in their solemn prayer and praise becomes deep and joyful, and their whole life and walk are bright with the glow of heaven. In the presence of the Lord the graces of the saints are developed; the church grows rich in all spiritual gifts; her warfare becomes victorious, and her continual worship sweet as the incense of the golden censer. What the moon is to the night, or the sun to the day, or the Nile to Egypt, or

the dew to the tender herb, or the soul to the human frame, that is the presence of Jesus to his church. Give us the Spirit of God and we will ask no endowments from the State, nor sigh for the prestige of princely patronage. Endow us, O God, with the Holy Ghost, and we have all we need. The poverty of the members, their want of learning, their want of rank, all these shall be as nothing. The Holy Ghost can make amends for all deficiencies, and clothe his poor and obscure people with an energy at which the world shall tremble. This made the apostolic church mighty, she had the Holy Ghost outpoured upon her: the lack of this made the mediæval ages dark as midnight, for men contended about words and letters, but forgot the Spirit: the return of this inestimable blessing has given us every true revival: the working of the eternal Spirit, the presence of Christ in the midst of his people is the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing beneath his wings. This has been our confidence, as a church, these eighteen years, and if we are yet to see greater and better things, we must still rely on this same strength, the divine presence of Jesus Christ by the wonder-working Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

It becomes then the great desire of every earnest Christian who loves the church of God, that Christ should be in the church, and that by his Spirit he should work wonders there, and I have selected this text with the view of stirring up the spiritual-minded among you to seek so great a blessing. Let me endeavour, in opening up this blessed text, to show the means and the course of action necessary if we would see the church revived by her Lord's presence.

I. And first, we learn from the text that before ever we can bring the Well-Beloved into our mother's house, the church, WE MUST FIND HIM PERSONALLY FOR OURSELVES.

We begin with that. "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth." How can we bring into the chamber of the church him whom we have not yet met with ourselves? How can we communicate grace to others instrumentally, unless, first of all, we have received it into our own hearts? I am not now about to speak of the need of conversion; we all know that no spiritual act can be performed until we become spiritual men; but I am now speaking about something higher than bare conversion. If we would bless the church, we must ourselves occupy a higher platform than that of being merely saved; we must be believers, walking in fellowship with Christ, and having, in that respect, found him whom our soul loveth. There are many believers who have only just enough grace to enable us to hope that they are alive; they have no strength with which to work for God's cause; they have not an arm to lend to the help of others, neither can they even see that which would comfort others, for they are blind, and cannot see afar off, they want all their sight, and all their strength, for themselves. Those who are to bring the Well-Beloved into our mother's house, must be of another kind. They must get beyond the feebleness which is full of doubting and fearing, into the assurance which grasps the Saviour, and the fellowship which lives in daily communion with him. I know there are some such in this church, and I would single them out, and speak to them thus: "Brother, if thou

wouldst bring Christ into the church which thou lovest, then, first of all, *thine inmost soul must so love Christ, that thou canst not live without his company.* This must be thy cry: "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" and this must be the goal of thine aspirations: "I have found him whom my soul loveth." It must not be talk, it must be soul-love; it must not be a profession of affection for Jesus, but the inmost bowels of our being must be moved by his name. The words are very strong, "him whom my soul loveth;" as if though the spouse might love the daughters of Jerusalem, might love the watchmen of the city, might love them all in their place, yet her soul's love, the essence of her love, her deepest, fondest, purest, and most real love, was all for him. Are there not such hearts here, virgin minds in whom Christ is first, last, midst, chief, and all in all? Oh, if there be, ye are the men, ye are the women, who, finding your Beloved, can bring him into the church. May God multiply your number, and may each of you have compassion on the languishing church of this chill age, and labour to restore to her the glory which has faded from her brow. Pray ye for Laodicea in her lukewarmness, and Sardis in her spiritual death; but you will only prevail in proportion as your inmost soul loves the Redeemer and abides in his love.

These ardent lovers of Jesus *must diligently seek him.* The chapter before us says that the spouse sought him, sought him on her bed, sought him in the streets, sought him in the broadways, sought him at last at the lips of the watchmen, sought him everywhere where he was likely to be found. We *must* enjoy the perpetual fellowship of Jesus. We who love him in our souls cannot rest until we know that he is with us. I fear that with some of us our sins have grieved him, and he has betaken himself to the far-off "mountains of myrrh and hills of frankincense." It may be our lax living, our neglect of prayer, or some other fault, has taken from us the light of his countenance. Let us resolve this morning that there shall be no rest unto our souls until once again he has returned unto us in the fulness of his manifested love, to abide in our hearts. Seek him, brother, seek him, sister. He is not far from any of you, but do seek him with an intense longing for him, for until thou dost thou art not the man to bring him into the assembly of the brethren. Labour to bring Jesus into the chambers of the church, but first be sure that thou hast him thyself, or thy zeal will be hypocrisy.

In seeking our Lord we must *use all ministries.* The spouse enquired of the watchmen. We are not to despise God's servants, for he is usually pleased to bless us through them, and it would be ungrateful both to him and to them to pass them by as useless. But, while we use the ministries, *we must go beyond them.* The spouse did not find her Lord through the watchmen; but she says, "it was but a little that I passed from them, that I found him whom my soul loveth." I charge you, my dear hearers, never rest content with listening to me. Do not imagine that hearing the truth preached simply and earnestly will of itself be a blessing to your souls. Far, far beyond the servant, pass to the Master. Be this the longing of each heart, each Sabbath-day, "Lord, give me fellowship with thyself." True, we are led to see Jesus sometimes, and I hope often, through listening to the truth proclaimed, but, O Lord, it is no outer

court worship that will satisfy us; we want to come into the holy of holies and stand at the mercy-seat itself. It is no seeing thee afar off and hearing about thee that will content our spirits, we must draw nigh unto thee, and behold thee as the world cannot. Like Simeon, we must take thee into our arms or we cannot say that we have seen God's salvation: like John, we must lean our heads upon thy bosom or we cannot rest. Thine apostles are well enough, thy prophets well enough, thy evangelists well enough; but oh, we feel constrained to go beyond them all, for we thirst after fellowship with thee, our Saviour. Those who feel thus will bless the church, but only such.

Note, that we must *search to the very utmost* till we find our Beloved. The Christian must leave no stone unturned till he gets back his fellowship with Christ. If any sin obstructs the way, it must be rigorously given up; if there be any neglected duty, it must be earnestly discharged; if there be any higher walk of grace, which is necessary to continuous fellowship, we must ascend it, fearing no hill of difficulty. We must not say, "there is a lion in the way"—if there be lions we must slay them; if the way be rough we must tread it; we must go on hands and knees if we cannot run; but we must reach to fellowship with Jesus; we must have Christ or pine till we do. Sacrifices we must make and penalties we must endure, but to Christ we must come, for we are feeble when we are absent from him, and quite incapable of rendering any great service to the church, till once for all we can say, "I found him, I held him, and I would not let him go." O dear brethren and sisters, I know there are some of you who can enter into what I mean; but I would to God there were many more to whom the first thought of life was Christ Jesus. Oh, for more Enochs, men who walk with God, whose habitual spirit is that of close communion with Jesus, meditating upon him, yea, more than that, sympathising with him, drinking into his spirit, changed into his likeness, living over again his life, because he is in them the monarch of their souls. O that we had a chosen band of elect spirits of this race, for surely the whole church would be revived through their influence; God, even our own God, would bless us; and we should see bright, halcyon days dawning for the bride of Christ. Here, then, is the first point: we must find the Lord Jesus for ourselves, or we cannot bring him into our mother's house.

I would beg every believer here to ask himself a few questions, such as these: "Am I walking in constant fellowship with Christ? If I am not, why not? Is it that I am worldly? Is it that I am proud, or indolent, or envious, or careless? Am I indulging myself in any sin? Is there anything whatever that divides me from Christ my Lord?" Let this be the resolution of every one of the Lord's people: "From this time forth I will seek unto the Lord my Saviour, and I will not be satisfied until I can say, 'I am coming up from the wilderness leaning upon the Beloved.'"

II. This brings us to the second point of the subject. If we would be a blessing to the church, and have already found Christ, WE MUST TAKE CARE TO RETAIN HIM. "I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and I would not let him go." From this I learn that in order to be of great use to the church of God, it is needful for those who commune with Christ to continue in that communion. How

comparatively easy it is to climb to the top of Pisgah! It needs but a little effort; many bold and gracious spirits are fully equal to it. But to keep there, to abide in that mountain, this is the difficulty. To come to Christ, and to sit down at his feet, is a simple thing enough for believers, and many of us have attained to it; but to sit day after day at the Master's feet is quite another matter. Oh, could I always be as I sometimes am! Could I not only rise above but remain there! But, alas, our spiritual nature is too much like this weather—it is balmy to-day; one would think that spring or summer had come; but, perhaps, to-night we may be chilled with frost and to-morrow drenched with rain. Ah, how fickle are our spirits. We are walking with Christ, rejoicing, leaping for joy; and anon the cold frosts of worldliness come over us, and we depart from him. Ye will never be strong to impart great blessings to others till you cease to wander, and learn the meaning of that text: "Abide in me." Note well, it is not "Look at me;" nor "Come near to me, and then go away from me," but "Abide in me." The branch does not leave the vine and then leap back again to the stock; you never saw a living branch of the vine roaming into the corners of the vineyard, or rambling over the wall; it abides in connection with the parent stem at all times, and even so should it be with the Christian.

Mark, that according to the text, it is very apparent that *Jesus will go away if he be not held.* "I held him and I would not let him go;" as if he would have gone if he had not been firmly retained. When he met with Jacob that night at the Jabbok, he said, "Let me go." He would not go without Jacob's letting him, but he would have gone if Jacob had loosed his hold. The patriarch replied, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This is one of Christ's ways and manners; it is one of the peculiarities of his character. When he walked to Emmaus with the two disciples, "he made as if he would have gone further:" they might have known it was none other than the Angel of the Covenant by that very habit. He would have gone further, but they constrained him, saying, "Abide with us for the day is far spent." If you are willing to lose Christ's company, he is never intrusive, he will go away from you, and leave you till you know his value and begin to pine for him. "I will go," says he, "and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." He will go unless you hold him.

But note, next, *he is very willing to be held.* Who could hold him if he were not? He is the omnipotent Saviour, and if he willed to withdraw he could do so: let us hold him as we might. But, mark his condescension. When his spouse said, "I held him, and I would not let him go," he did not go, he could not go, for his love held him as well as her hands. Christ is willing to be held. He loves that sacred violence which takes him by force, that holy diligence which leaves not a gap open by which he may escape, but shuts every door, bars every bolt, and saith, "I have thee now and I will take care that if I lose thee it shall be through no fault of mine." Jesus is willing enough to be retained by hearts which are full of his love.

And, brethren, whenever you have Christ, please to remember that *you are able to hold him.* She who held him in the Song was no stronger

than you are; she was but a feeble woman, poorly fed under the Old Testament dispensation; you have drunk the new wine of the new covenant, and you are stronger than she. You can hold him, and he will not be able to go from you. "How," say you, "shall I be able to hold him?" Oh, have you grasped him? Is he with you? Now, then, hold him fast by your faith; trust him implicitly, rest in him for every day's cares, for every moment's ills. Walk by faith and he will walk with you. Hold him also with the grasp of love. Let your whole heart go out towards him. Embrace him with the arms of mighty affection, enchain him with ardent admiration. Lay hold upon him by faith, and clasp him with love. Be also much in prayer. Prayer casts a chain about him. He never leaves the heart that prays. There is a sweet perfume about prayer that always attracts the Lord; wherever he perceives it rising up to heaven there will he be. Hold him, too, by your obedience to him. Never quarrel with him. Let him have his way. He will stop in any house where he can be master; he will stay nowhere where some other will lords it over his. Watch his words; be careful to obey them all. Be very tender in your conduct, so that nothing grieves him. Show to him that you are ready to suffer for his sake. I believe that where there is a prayerful, careful, holy, loving, believing walk towards Jesus, the fellowship of the saint with his Lord will not be broken, but it may continue for months and years. There is no reason, except in ourselves, why fellowship with Jesus should not continue throughout an entire life; and oh, if it did, it would make earth into heaven, and lift us up to the condition of angels, if not beyond them, and we should be the men who would bring Christ into the church, and through the church into the world. The church would be blest, and God would be glorified, and souls would be saved, if there were some among us who thus held him, and would not let him go.

I want to call your attention to one thought before I leave this, and that is, the spouse says, "I held *him*." Now, a great many persons in the world are holding their creed, and if it is a correct one I hope they will hold it; but that is the main business of their religious life; they do nothing else but hold this doctrine or that. Hold it, brother, hold it: it would be a pity you should let it go if it be the truth, but still it is more important to hold your Lord. Certain others are engrossed in holding scriptural ordinances, and saying, "I hold this and I hold that." Well, hold it brother; if it is God's ordinance do not let it go. But, after all, if there be anything I hold above all else, I hold *him*. Is not that the best grip a soul ever gets, when she lays hold of Christ? "I held *him* and I would not let him go." Ah, Lord, I may be mistaken about doctrine, but I am not mistaken about thee. I may, perhaps, be staggered in my belief of some dogma which I thought was truth, but I am not staggered about *thee*. Thou Son of God made flesh for me. thou art all my salvation and all my desire: I rest on thee only, without a shadow of mixture of any other hope, and I love thee supremely, desiring to honour thee and to obey thee in life and until death. I hold thee, thou Covenant Angel, and I will not let thee go.

Dear friends! make this the mark of your life, that you hold him and will not let him go. You will be the kind of men to bless the

church by leading the Well-Beloved into her chambers, if you know how to abide in him yourselves.

III. It appears from the text that, after the spouse had thus found Christ for herself and held him, SHE BROUGHT HIM INTO THE CHURCH —"I brought him to my mother's house." We ought lovingly to remember the church of God. By the Holy Spirit we were begotten unto newness of life, but it was in the church, and through the preaching of the word there that we were brought into the light of life. We owe our conversion, the most of us, to some earnest teacher of the truth in the church of God, or to some of those godly works which were written by Christian men. Through the church's instrumentality the Bible itself has been preserved to us, and by her the gospel has been preached to every age. She is our mother and we love her. I know that many of you, dear friends, the members of this church, love the church, and you can say, "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning." When you are away from this place, and cannot mix in our solemn assemblies, your heart mourns like one in banishment. Have not I heard you cry, "Ziona, Ziona, our holy and beautiful house, wherein we have worshipped our God, the house which is built of living stones, among whom Christ himself is the corner-stone, even thy church, O Jesus: would God I were in her midst again, and could once more unite my praises with those that dwell within her." Yes, and because we love our mother's house and the chamber of her that conceived us, we desire to bring Christ into the church more and more. Did I hear a harsh but honest voice exclaim, "But, I find much fault with the church?" Brother, if thou lovest her, thou wilt go backward and cast a mantle over all. But, suppose thy candour is compelled to see faults in her; then there is so much the more need of her Lord's presence in her to cure those faults. The more sickly she is, the more she wants him to be her strength and her physician. I say, therefore, to thee, dear friend, above all things, seek to bring Christ into an imperfect church, and a weak church, and an erring church, that she may become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

I have shown you by whom it must be—by those who have found him, and who hold him; and now we will mention the methods by which our blessed Lord can be brought into his church. The saints can bring him in by their *testimony*. I hope that often Christ is here when I have borne testimony to you of his power to save, of his atoning blood, of his exaltation in heaven, of the perfection of his character, and of his willingness to save. Many a Sabbath day his name has been like ointment poured forth in this place. Is there any subject that so delights you as that which touches upon Christ? Is not that the rarest string in all the harp of scriptural truth? Well, every true minister, by bearing witness for Christ, helps to bring him into the church.

But, others can do it by their *prayers*. There is a mysterious efficacy in the prayers of men who dwell near to God. Even if they were compelled to keep their beds, and do nothing but pray, they would pour benedictions upon the church. We want our dear sick friends to get well and come among us at once in full health; but I do not know, I do not know; they may be of more service to the church where they

are. "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest day nor night, till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Now, if there were not some saints kept awake at night by sickness to pray, we should not so fully realise that word, "Give him no rest day nor night." Some of those dear ones, whose faces we miss from among us, keep up the perpetual ministry of intercession. Their incense of prayer goes up at all hours; when the most of us are rightly enough at sleep they are compelled to wake, and therefore are led still to pray. How many blessings come down upon the church of God through the prayers of his feeble saints it is not possible for us to tell; but I believe if all of us were to set apart a special time for praying and pleading with Christ that he would come into his church, we should not be long before we saw a wonderful effect resulting from those pleadings. Wrestling prayers bring Christ into the innermost chambers of the church of God. Let us try the power of prayer.

And, there is no doubt, dear brethren, that Christ is often brought into the church by the *example* of those eminent saints who abide in Christ. You know what I mean. There is a very manner and air about some Christian men which honours Christ, and benefits his people. They may not be gifted in speech, but their very spirit speaks, they are so gentle, loving, tender, earnest, truthful, upright, gracious. Their paths, like the paths of God himself, drop fatness. They are the anointed of the Lord, and you perceive it. Perhaps you could not say that this virtue or that is very prominent, but it is the altogether; it is their life at home, their life in public, their church life, their private life, their entire conduct makes you see that the Holy Ghost is in them, and when they come into the church they bring the Spirit of God with them, and are thus a great means of blessing to all with whom they associate. I do pray, brethren, that in some way or other, each one of us may try to bring Jesus Christ into the midst of his own people. I am afraid there are some who on the contrary are driving him away—church members that, instead of blessing the church, are a curse to it. I see a great heap before me—a vast heap that God has gathered through my instrumentality; but the winnowing fan is going, and the chaff is flying. Are you, dear friends, among the chaff or the wheat? Are you seed for the sower, or fuel for the flame unquenchable? Oh! live near to Christ; live in Christ; may Christ live in you; then will you enrich the church of God; but if you do not, but only make a profession of love with your lips, what shall I say unto you? I mourn over you. Take heed of living a weak life—a life without God in it—a life without Christ in it—a life which a Pharisee might live. Seek to live the life of a true-born child of God, lest you hinder the church's usefulness, and deprive her of her Lord's presence.

IV. This leads me to the last point, which is this, to CHARGE THE CHURCH THAT SHE BE CAREFUL NOT TO DISTURB THE LORD'S REPOSE, if we have been enabled by divine grace to bring the Lord into the chambers of our mother's house. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." Observe, then, that *the Lord Jesus*

in his church is not indifferent to the conduct of his people. We are not to suppose that because the sin of all God's elect is pardoned, therefore it is of small consequence how they live. By no manner of means. The Master of this great house is not blind nor deaf, neither is he a person who is utterly careless as to how the house is managed; on the contrary, as God is a jealous God, so is Christ a jealous husband to his church. He will not tolerate in her what he would tolerate in the world. She lies near his heart, and she must be chaste to him. What a solemn work the Lord did in the early church. That story of Ananias and Sapphira—it is often used most properly to illustrate the danger of lying; but that is not the point of the narrative. Ananias and Sapphira were members of the church at Jerusalem, and they lied not unto men, which would have been sin enough, but in lying to the church officers they lied unto God, and the result was their sudden death. Now, you are not to suppose that this was a solitary case. Wherever there is a true church of God, the judgments of God are always going on in it. I speak now not only what I have read, but what I have known and seen with mine eyes; what I am as sure of as I am sure of any fact in history. The apostle Paul, speaking of the same in his day, said that in a certain church there was so much sin that many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept; that is to say, there was great sickness in the church, and many died. Judgments are begun in the house of God and are always going on there. I have seen men in the church who have walked at a distance from God, who have been visited with severe chastisements; others who have been of hot and proud spirit, have been terribly humbled; and some who have arrogantly touched God's ark, and the doom of Uzzah has befallen them. I have seen it and do know it. And so it always will be. The Lord Jesus Christ looking around his church, if he sees anything evil in it, will do one of two things; either he will go right away from his church because the evil is tolerated there, and he will leave that church to be like Laodicea, to go on from bad to worse, till it becomes no church at all; or else he will come and he will trim the lamp, or to use the figure of the fifteenth of John, he will prune the vine-branch and with his knife will cut off this member, and the other, and cast them into the fire; while, as for the rest, he will cut them till they bleed again, because they are fruit-bearing members, but they have too much wood, and he wants them to bring forth more fruit. It is not a trifling matter to be in the church of God. God's fire is in Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem. "His fan is in his hand, and he shall thoroughly purge" —what? The world. O no, "his floor," the church. And then, again, "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify"— —what? The heathen nations. No, "the sons of Levi"—his own people. So that Christ is not indifferent to what is going on in the church, and it is needful that when he comes to the church to take his repose, and solace himself there, we should not stir him up nor awake him till he please.

But many things will drive our Lord away, and these shall have our closing words. Dear fellow members of this church, may we each one be more watchful lest the Bridegroom should withdraw from us. He will go away if we grow proud. If we are boastful, and say,

"There is some reason why God should bless us," and should begin to speak hectoringly towards weaker brethren, the Lord will let us know that "not unto us, not unto us, but unto his name shall be all the glory."

Again, if there be a want of love among us, the Lord of love will be offended. The holy dove loves not scenes of strife; he frequents the calm still waters of brotherly love. There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, where brethren dwelt together in unity. If any of you have half a hard thought towards another, get rid of it; if there be the beginnings of anything like jealousy, quench the sparks. "Leave off strife," says Solomon, "before it be meddled with," as if he said, "End it before you begin it," which, though it seems strangely paradoxical, is most wise advice. "Little children love one another." "Walk in love as Christ also has loved us." May discord be far from us.

Notice the beautiful imagery of the text. "I charge you by the roes and the hinds of the field." In ancient times gazelles were often tamed, and were the favourite companions of Eastern ladies: the gazelle might be standing near its mistress, fixing its loving eyes upon her, but if a stranger clapped his hands it would hasten away. The roes and hinds "*of the field*" are even yet more jealous things, a sound will startle them, even the breath of the hunter tainting the gale puts them to speedy flight. Even thus is it with Jesus. A little thing, a very little thing, will drive him from us, and it may be many a day before our repentance shall be able to find him again. He has suffered so much from sin that he cannot endure the approach of it. His pure and holy soul abhors the least taint of iniquity.

Let us gather from the text that there are some things in the true church which give our Lord rest. He is represented here as though he slept in the church, "That ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please." Wherever he sees true repentance, real faith, holy consecration, purity of life, chastity of love, there Christ rests. I believe he finds no sweeter happiness even in heaven than the happiness of accepting his people's prayers and praises. Our love is very sweet to him; our deeds of gratitude are very precious, the broken alabaster boxes of self-sacrifices done for him are very fair in his esteem. He finds no rest in the world, he never did; but he finds sweet rest on the bosoms of his faithful ones. He loves to come into a pure church, and there to say, "I am at home. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee."

Let us be very watchful, too, against all impurity. Anything like uncleanness in a Christian will soon send the Master away from the church. You know what it was that brought the evil upon the house of Eli. It was because his sons made themselves vile even at the tabernacle door. The young people in that case were the immediate cause of the mischief, but it was the fault of the elder ones that they restrained them not. Watch against all evil passions and corrupt desires. Be ye holy even as your Father which is in heaven is holy.

And then, again, a want of prayer will send him away. There are members of some churches who never come to the prayer-meetings, and I should be afraid that their private prayers cannot be any too earnest.

Of course we speak not of those who have good excuse; but there are some who habitually and wilfully neglect the assembling of themselves together; these are worthy of condemnation. Oh, let us continue a a prayerful church as we have hitherto been, otherwise the Master may say, "They do not value the blessing, for they will not even ask for it; they evidently do not care about my Spirit, for they will not meet together and cry for him." Do not grieve him by any such negligence of prayer.

So, too, we may grieve the Spirit by worldliness. If any of you who are rich get to imitate the fashions of the world and act as worldlings do, you cannot expect the Lord to bless us. You are Achans in the camp, if such is the case. And if you who are poor get to be envious of others and speak harshly of others to whom God has given more substance than to you, that again will grieve the Lord. You know how the children of Israel in the wilderness provoked him, and their provocation mostly took the form of murmuring; they complained of this and of that: if they had the manna they wanted flesh, and if they had water gushing from the rock they must needs have more. I pray you by the bowels of mercies that are in Christ Jesus, by all the compassion he has manifested towards us, by the high love he deserves of us, since he laid down his life for us, by your allegiance to him as your King, by your trust in him as your Saviour, by your love to him as the Bridegroom of your souls, "stir not up nor awake my love till he please."

Let me ask you to be more in prayer; let me pray you to live nearer to him; let me entreat you for the church's sake, and for the world's sake, to be more thoroughly Christ's than you ever have been; and may the power of the Holy Spirit enable you in this. I do not fear lest I should lose that which I have wrought, for God will establish the work of our hands upon us; but yet I do put up to him daily the prayer that this church may not be found in years to come to be a building of wood, and hay, and stubble, that shall be consumed in the fire of heresy or discord, or some other testing flame which God may suffer to come upon it; but oh, may you, my beloved brethen and sisters, be gold, and silver, and precious stones, that the workman at the last, saved himself, may not have to suffer loss, nor the Master be dishonoured in the eyes of men. May you stand as a sparkling pile of precious gems, inhabited by the eternal Spirit, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—John xv.; Solomon's Song iii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PRECIOUS DEATHS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 18TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."—Psalm cxvi. 15.

DAVID sought deliverance from imminent peril, and he felt sure of obtaining it; for being a servant of the Lord he knew that his life was too precious in the sight of God for it to be lightly brought to an end. It should be a source of consolation to all tried saints that God will not deliver them over to the hands of their enemies; it is not the will of their Father who is in heaven that one of his little ones should perish. A shepherd who did not care for his sheep might suffer the wolf to devour it, but he who prizes it highly will put his own life in jeopardy to pluck the defenceless one from between the monster's jaws.

The text informs us that the deaths of God's saints are precious to him. How different, then, is the estimate of human life which God forms from that which has ruled the minds of great warriors and mighty conquerors. Had Napoleon spoken forth his mind about the lives of men in the day of battle, he would have likened them to so much water spilt upon the ground. To win a victory, or subdue a province, it mattered not though he strewed the ground with corpses thick as autumn leaves, nor did it signify though in every village orphans and widows wailed the loss of sires and husbands. What were the deaths of conscript peasants when compared with the fame of the Emperor? So long as Austria was humbled, or Russia invaded, little cared the imperial Corsican though half the race had perished. Not thus is it with the King of kings; he spares the poor and needy, and saves the souls of the needy, and precious shall their blood be in his sight. Our glorious Leader never squanders the lives of his soldiers; he values the church militant beyond all price; and though he permits his saints to lay down their lives for his sake, yet is not one life spent in vain, or unnecessarily expended.

How different also is the Lord's estimate from that of persecutors! They have hounded the saints to death, considering that they did God service. They have thought no more of burning martyrs than

destroying noxious insects, and massacres of believers have been to them as the slaying of wild beasts. Did they not strike a medal to celebrate the massacre of the Huguenots in France? and did not the infallible Pope himself consider it to be a business for which to offer *Te Deums* to God? What if murder made the streets of Paris run with blood, the slaughtered ones were only Protestants, and the world thought itself well rid of them. Foxes and wolves, and Protestants were best exterminated. As for so-called Anabaptists they were counted worse than vipers, and to crush them utterly was reckoned to be salutary Christian discipline. The enemies of the church of God have hunted the saints as if they were beasts of the chase. They have let loose upon them the dogs of war, and the hell-hounds of the Inquisition, as if they were not fit to live. "Away with such a fellow from the earth" has been the general cry of persecutors against the men of whom the world was not worthy. But, precious is their blood in his sight. Though they have been cast to the beasts in the amphitheatre, or dragged to death by wild horses, or murdered in dungeons, or slaughtered amongst the snows of the Alps, or made to fatten Smithfield with their gore, precious has their blood been, and still is it in *his* sight, who will avenge his own elect when the day shall come for his patience to have had her perfect work, and for his justice to begin her dread assize.

The text, also, corrects another estimate, namely, our own. We love the people of God, they are exceedingly precious to us, and, therefore, we are too apt to look upon their deaths as a very grievous loss. We would never let them die at all if we could help it. If it were in our power to confer immortality upon our beloved Christian brethren and sisters, we should surely do it, and to their injury we should detain them here, in this wilderness, depriving them of a speedy entrance into their inheritance on the other side the river. It would be cruel to them, but I fear we should often be guilty of it. We should hold them here a little longer, and a little longer yet, finding it hard to relinquish our grasp. The departures of the saints cause us many a pang. We fret, alas! also, we even repine and murmur. We count that we are the poorer because of the eternal enriching of those beloved ones who have gone over to the majority, and entered into their rest. Be it known that while *we* are sorrowing *Christ* is rejoicing. His prayer is, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am," and in the advent of every one of his own people to the skies he sees an answer to that prayer, and is, therefore, glad. He beholds in every perfected one another portion of the reward for the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied in it. We are grieving here, but he is rejoicing there. Dolorous are their deaths in *our* sight, but precious are their deaths in *his* sight. We hang up the mournful escutcheon, and sit us down to mourn our full, and yet, meanwhile, the bells of heaven are ringing for "the bridal feast above," the streamers are floating joyously in every heavenly street, and the celestial world keeps holiday because another heir of heaven has entered upon his heritage. May this correct our grief. Tears are permitted to us, but they must glisten in the light of faith and hope. Jesus wept, but Jesus never repined. We, too, may weep, but not as those who are without hope, nor yet as though

forgetful that there is greater cause for joy than for sorrow in the departure of our brethren.

I. Coming now to the instructive text before us, we shall remark, in the first place, that THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IMPLIES A VIEW OF DEATH OF A PECULIAR KIND. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Death in itself cannot be precious; it is terrible. It cannot be a precious thing to God to see the noblest works of his hand torn in pieces, his skilful embroidery in the human body rent, defiled, and given over to decay. Death in itself cannot be a theme for rejoicing with God. But death in the case of believers is another matter. To them, it is not death to die; it is a departure out of this world unto the Father, a being unclothed that we may be clothed upon, a falling asleep, an entrance into the Kingdom. To the saint death is by no means such a thing as happeneth unto the unregenerate.

And, observe wherein this change lies. It lies mainly in the fact that death is no more the infliction of a penalty for sin upon the believer. One great cardinal truth of the gospel is that the sins of believers were laid upon Christ, and were punished upon Christ, and that, consequently, no sin is imputed to the believer, neither can any be penally visited upon him. His sin was punished in his substitute. The righteous wrath of God has altogether ceased towards those for whom Christ died. It could not be consistent with justice that the death penalty should be executed upon Christ, and then should be again visited upon those for whom Christ was a substitute. Death, then, does not come to me as a believer because I deserve it and must be punished by it: it comes so to the ungodly, it is upon them a fit visitation for their iniquities, the beginning of an unending death, which shall be their perpetual portion. To the saints the sting of death is gone, and the victory of the grave is removed; it is no more a penalty but a privilege to die. What if I say it is a covenant blessing: so Paul esteemed it, for when he said "All things are yours, things present or things to come," he added, "or life, or death, all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's:" as if the believer's death came to him amongst other good and precious things by the way of his being Christ's; and Christ's being God's. To fall asleep in Jesus is a blessing of the covenant; it is a grace to be asked for, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word." I would not miss it; if I might make my choice between living till Christ comes, so as to be changed only, and not to die, or of actually sleeping in the dust, I would prefer to die, for in this the believer who shall fall asleep will be the more closely conformed to Christ Jesus. He will have passed into the sepulchre and slept in the tomb as his master did; he will know, as Jesus knows, what death pangs mean, and what it is to gaze upon the invisible, while the visible retreats into the distance. Nay, let us die. The Head has traversed the valley of death-shade, and let the members rejoice to follow.

> "As the Lord their Saviour rose,
> So all his followers must."

And, therefore, as the Lord the Saviour slept, so let us sleep. When

we think of our Master in the tomb, our hearts say, "Let us go that we may die with him." We would not be divided from him in life or in death. We are so wedded to him that we say, "Where thou goest I will go, where thou diest I will die, and with thee would I be buried, that with thee in the resurrection morning I may be partaker of the resurrection." Death, then, is so far changed in its aspect as it respects the saints, that it is no longer a legal infliction, but it comes to us as a covenant blessing conforming us to Christ.

The statement of the text refutes the gloomy thought that death is a ceasing to be. It is not the annihilation of a man, nor ought it ever to be regarded as such. In all ages there has lingered upon mankind the fear that to die may involve ceasing to be; and of all thoughts this is one of the most gloomy. But, when God says that the death of a believer is precious to him, it is clear that no tinge of annihilation is in the idea, for where would be the preciousness of a believer ceasing to exist? Oh, no, the thought is gone from us. We know that to die is not to renounce existence; we understand that death is but a passage into a higher and a nobler existence. The soul emancipated from all sinfulness passes the Jordan, and is presented without fault before the throne of God. No purgatorial fires are needed to cleanse her; the self-same day she leaves the body she is with Christ in paradise, because fit to be there. The body in death, it is true, undergoes decay, but even for that meaner part of our manhood there is no destruction. Let us not malign the grave, it is no more a prison, but an inn, a halting place upon the road to resurrection. As Esther bathed herself in spices that she might be fit for the embraces of the king, so is the body purged from its corruption that it may rise immortal.

> "Corruption, earth, and worms
> Shall but refine this flesh,
> Till my triumphant spirit comes
> To put it on afresh."

The body could not rise if it had not first died; it could not spring up like a fair flower unless it had first been sown. If a grain of wheat fall not into the ground and die, how springeth it up again? but the body is sown in dishonor that it may be raised in glory; it is sown in weakness that it may be raised in power; it is laid in the grave as a natural body, that it may arise therefrom by the infinite power of the almighty a spiritual body, full of life, and glory, and majesty. Let this mortal body die, aye, let it moulder into dust! What more fit than earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes. Let the gold go into the fining pot, it will lose none of its preciousness, it will only be delivered from its dross. Let the gem go to the lapidary's house, for it shall glitter the more brightly in the royal crown, in the day when the Lord shall make up his jewels.

Death, too, we may be sure from this statement cannot be any serious detriment to the believer after all; it cannot be any serious loss to a saint to die. Looking upon the poor corpse, it does seem to be a catastrophe for death to have passed his cold hand across the brow, but it is not so, for the very death is precious; therefore, it is no calamity. Death if rightly viewed is a blessing from the Lord's hand. A child

once found a bird's nest in which were eggs, which it looked upon as a great treasure. It left them, and by-and-by, when a week or so had passed, went back again. It returned to its mother grieving: "Mother," said the child, "I had some beautiful eggs in this nest, and now they are destroyed; nothing is left but a few pieces of broken shell. Pity me, mother, for my treasure is gone." But the mother said, "Child, here is no destruction; there were little birds within those eggs, and they have flown away, and are singing now among the branches of the trees; the eggs are not wasted, child, but have answered their purpose. It is better far as it is." So, when we look at our departed ones, we are apt to say, "And is this all thou hast left us? Ruthless spoiler, are these ashes all?" But, faith whispers "No, the shell is broken, but amongst the birds of paradise, singing amid unwithering bowers, you shall find the spirits of your beloved ones; their true manhood is not here, but has ascended to its Father, God." It is not a loss to die, it is a gain, a lasting, a perpetual, an illimitable gain. The man is at one moment weak, and cannot stir a finger; in an instant he is clothed with power. Call ye not this a gain? That brow is aching; it shall wear a crown within the next few tickings of the clock. Is that no gain? That hand is palsied; it shall at once wave the palm branch. Is that a loss? The man is sick beyond physician's power; but he shall be where the inhabitant is never sick. Is that a loss? When Baxter lay a dying, and his friends came to see him, almost the last word he said was in answer to the question, "Dear Mr. Baxter, how are you?" "Almost well," said he, and so it is. Death cures; it is the best medicine, for they who die are not only almost well, but healed for ever. You will see, then, that the statement of our text implies that the aspect of death is altogether altered from that appearance in which men commonly behold it. Death to the saints is not a penalty, it is not destruction, it is not even a loss.

II. But now, secondly, I want your earnest thought to a further consideration of the text. THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IS OF A MOST UNLIMITED KIND.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." It is a broad statement, wide and comprehensive, and I want you to observe that there is no limit here as to *whom*. Provided that the dying one be a saint, his death is precious. He may be the greatest in the church, he may be the least: he may be the boldest confessor, he may be the most timid trembler; but if a saint, his death is precious in God's sight. I can well conceive the truth of this in respect to martyrs; to see a man enduring torments, but refusing to deny his Lord; to behold him offered life and wealth if he will recant, but to hear him say, "I cannot and I will not draw back by the help of God:" to mark every nerve throbbing with anguish, and every single member of his body torn with torment, and yet to see the man faithful to his God even to the close,—why, this is a spectacle which God himself might well count precious. The church embalms the memories of her martyrs wherever they die—precious in God's sight must their deaths be. The deaths too of those who work for Christ, until at last weary nature gives out, when body and brain are both exhausted, and the man can no longer continue in his beloved labour, but lays down his body and his charge together, never

putting off his harness until he puts off his flesh—methinks the deaths of such men must be precious in God's sight. But, not more so, mark that! not more so than the departure of the patient sufferer, scarcely able to say a word, solitary and unknown, only able to serve God by submissively enduring pains which make night weary and day intolerable. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the consumptive girl who gradually melts into heaven; the death of the pauper in the workhouse, without a friend, but uncomplainingly bearing God's will, is as precious (not perhaps under some aspects), but as truly precious in the sight of the Lord as that of the most useful preacher of the word. Precious to Jehovah is the death of the least in the ranks, as the death of those who rush to the front and bear the brunt of the battle well. There are no distinctions in the text; if you be a saint no one may know you, you may be too poor and too illiterate to be of much account in the world, you may die and pass away, and no record may be among the sons of men, no stone set up over your lonely grave, but precious in the sight of the Lord in every case is the death of his saints. There is no limit as to whom.

And, mark you, there is no limit at all as to *when*. It matters not at what age the saint dies, his death is precious to God. Very delightful to those who observe them are the deathbed scenes of young children who have early been converted to God. There is a peculiar charm about the pious prattler's departing utterances. He can hardly pronounce his words aright, but he seems illuminated from above, and to talk of Jesus and his angels, and the harps of gold, and the better land, as if he had been there. Some of you have had the privilege to carry in your bosoms some of those nurselings for the skies, unfledged angels sent here but for a little while, and then caught away to heaven, that their mothers' hearts might follow them, and their fathers' aspirations might pursue them. I confess to a great liking for such books as "Janeway's Token for Children," where the deaths of many pious boys and girls are recorded with the holy sayings which they used. The Lord sets a high value on his little ones, and, therefore, frequently gathers them while they are like flowers in the bud. When these favoured children die, Jesus stands at their little cots, and, while he calls them away, he whispers, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Equally precious, however, are the deaths of those who depart in middle life. These we usually regret most of all, because of the terrible blanks which they leave behind them. What, shall the hero fall when the battle wants him most? Shall the reaper be sent home and made to lay down his sickle just when the harvest is heaviest, and the day requires every worker? To us it seemeth strange, but to God it is precious. Oh, could we lift the veil, could we understand what now we see not, we should perceive that it was better for the saints to die when they died, than it would have been for them to have lived longer lives. Though the widow mourns, and the orphans are left penniless, it was good that the father fell asleep. Though a loving church gathered round the hearse and mourned that their minister had been taken away in the fulness of his vigour, it was best that God should take him to himself. Let us be persuaded of this, that no believer dies an untimely death. In every consistent Christian's case

that promise is true, "With long life also will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation;" for long life is not to be reckoned by years as men count them. He lives longest who lives best. Many a man has crowded half a century into a single year. God gives his people life, not as the clock ticks, but as he helps them to serve him; and he can make them to live much in a short space of time. There are no untimely figs gathered into God's basket; the great Master of the vineyard plucks the grapes when they are ripe and ready to be taken, and not before. Saintly deaths are precious in his sight.

And, dear brethren, if the Lord's providence permits the saint to live to a good old age, then is his death precious too. The decease which has lately occurred among us* will abide in my memory as one of my choice treasures. I say but little of it to-day, for on another Sabbath morning I may be able to tell you some of those choice things which our dear brother and venerated elder uttered which charmed and gladdened us all as we lingered about his bed. You knew him; you knew what a man he was in life; he was just such a man in death. But a day or so before he died, while he could scarcely draw his breath, he told me with a smile that it was the happiest day of his life. As he was always wont to rejoice in God while he was here among us, so he was kept in the same blessed spirit even to the end. "See," said he, "what a blessed thing it is to be here." "Here!" I said. "What, on a dying bed?" "Yes," said he, "for I am Christ's, and Christ is mine; I am in Him, and He is in me; what more would I have? It is the happiest day of my life," and again he smiled serenely. It was all joy with him, all bliss with him. Pain might rack him, or weakness might prostrate him, but ever did his spirit magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God his Saviour. Yes, these ripe ones, like the fruits of autumn, fall willingly from off the tree of life when but a gentle breeze stirs the branches. The deaths of these are precious unto God. There is no limitation as to when.

And, again, there is no limitation as to *where*. Precious shall their deaths be in his sight, let them happen where they may. Up in the lonely garret where there are none of the appliances of comfort, but all the marks of the deepest penury, up there where the dying work-girl or the crossing sweeper dies—there is a sight most precious unto God; or yonder, in the long corridor of the hospital, where many are too engrossed in their own griefs to be able to shed a tear of sympathy, there passes away a triumphant spirit, and precious is that death in God's sight. Alone, utterly alone in the dead of night, surprised, unable to call in a helper, saintly life often has passed away; but in that form also precious is the death in God's sight. Far away from home and kindred, wandering in the backwoods or on the prairie, the believer has died where there was none to call him brother; but it mattered not, his death was precious in the sight of the Lord. Or, a bullet has brought the missive from the throne which said, "Return and be with God," and falling in the ditch to die amongst the wounded and the dead, with no onlooker but the silent stars and blushing moon, amidst the carnage the death of

* Rev. W. Dransfield, a beloved elder of the church at the Tabernacle, died February 15th, full of years.

the believing soldier has been precious in the sight of Jehovah. Ah, and run over in the street, or crushed, and bruised, and mangled in the railway accident, or stifled in the pit by the coal damp, or sinking amidst the gurgling waters of the ocean, or falling beneath the assassin's knife, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. They are everywhere in the sight of God when they die, and he looks upon them with a smile, for their death is precious to his heart.

There is no limit as to where, and, dear brethren, there is no limit as to *how* "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Their deaths may happen suddenly; they may be alive, and active, and and in a moment fall down dead, but their death is precious. I could never understand that prayer which is put into the prayer-book, that God would deliver us from sudden death. Why, methinks, it is the most desirable death that a person could die, not to know you die at all, to have no fears, no shiverings on the brink, but to be busy in your Master's service here, and suddenly to stand in the white robe before his throne in heaven, shutting the eye to the scenes below, and opening it the scenes above. I know, if I might ask such a favour, I would covet to die as a dear brother in Christ died, who gave out this hymn from his pulpit:—

> "Father, I long, I faint to see
> The place of thine abode;
> I'd leave thine earthly courts, and flee
> Up to thy seat, my God."

Just as he finished that line in the pulpit he bowed his head, and his prayer was answered, he was immediately before the throne of God. Is there anything in that to pray against? Is seems to us much to be desired; but at any rate, such a death as that is precious in God's sight. But if we linger long, if the tabernacle be taken down piece by piece, and the curtains be slowly folded up, and the tent pins gently put away, precious in the sight of the Lord is such a death as that. Should we die by fierce disease, which shakes the strong man, or by gentle decline, which slowly saps and undermines, it matters not. Should a sudden stroke take us, and men call it a judgment, it is no judgment to the believer, for from him all judgments are past, and the true light of love shineth on him. Die how he may, and where he may, and when he may, and let him be in what position he will when he dies, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

III. And now, thirdly, coming to the very soul and marrow of the text, we notice that THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT MAY BE FULLY SUSTAINED AND ACCOUNTED FOR, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," is a most sober and truthful declaration.

First, because their persons were, and always will be, precious unto God. His saints! Why, these are his elect; these are they upon whom his love was set before the mountains lifted their heads into the clouds; these are they whom he bought with precious blood, cheerfully laying down his life for their sakes; these are they whose names are borne on Jesus' breast, and engraven upon the palms of his hands; these are his children; these are members of his body; these are his bride, his spouse;

he is married unto them: therefore, everything that concerns them must be precious. Do I not look with interest upon the history of my child? Do I not carefully observe everything that happens to my beloved spouse? Where there is love the little becometh great, and what would seem a matter of no concern in a stranger is gilded with great importance. The Lord loves his people so intensely that the very hairs of their heads are numbered: his angels bear them up in their hands lest they dash their foot against a stone, and because they are the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold, therefore their deaths are precious unto the Lord.

Precious are the deaths of God's saints next, because precious graces are in death very frequently tested, and as frequently revealed and perfected. How could I know faith to be true faith if it would not stand a trial? The precious faith of God's elect is proved to be such when it can bear the last ordeal of all; when the man can look grim death in the face, and yet not be staggered through unbelief, when he can gaze across the gulf, so often veiled in cloud, and yet not fear that he shall be able to overleap it, and land in the Saviour's arms. Believe me, the faith which only plays with earthly joys, and cannot endure the common trials of life, will soon be dissipated by the solemn trial of death; but that which a man can die with, that is faith indeed. Faith, moreover, brings with it, as its companions, an innumerable company of graces, amongst which chiefly are hope and love. Blessed is the man who can hope in God when heart and flesh are failing him, and can love the Lord even though he smite him with many pains, yea, even though he slay him. The death of the body is a crucible for our graces, and much that we thought to be true grace disappears in the furnace heat; but God counts the trial of our faith much more precious than that of gold, and therefore he counts deathbeds precious in his sight. Besides, how many graces are revealed in dying hours. I have known plants of God's right hand planting that had always been in the shade before, and yet they have enjoyed sunlight at last; silent spirits that have laid their finger on their lips throughout their lives but have taken them down, and have declared their love to Jesus just when they were departing. Like the swan, of whom the fable hath it, that it singeth never till is comes to its end, so many a child of God has begun to sing in his last hours; because he has done with the glooms of earth, he begins to sing here his swan song, intending to sing on for ever and ever. You cannot tell what is in a man to the fulness of him till he is tried to the full, and therefore the last trial, inasmuch as it strippeth off earth-born imperfections and developes in us that which is of God, and brings to the front the real and the true, and throws to the back the superficial and the pretentious, is precious in God's sight.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," for a third reason, because precious attributes are in dying moments gloriously illustrated. I refer now to the *divine* attributes. In life and in death we prove the attribute of God's righteousness, we find that he does not lie but is faithful to his word. We learn the attribute of mercy, he is gentle and pitiful to us in the time of our weakness. We prove the attribute of his immutability, we find him "the same

yesterday, to-day, and for ever." There is scarcely a single characteristic of the divine being which is not set out delightfully to the child of God and to onlookers when the saint is departing. And the same is true of the promises as well as the attributes. Precious promises are illustrated upon dying beds. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Who would have known the meaning of that to the full, if he had not found that the Lord did not leave him when all else was gone? "When thou passeth through the river I will be with thee." Who could have known the depth of truth in that word, if saints did not pass through the last cold stream. "As thy days so shall thy strength be." Who could have known to the full that word, if he had not seen the believer triumphant on his dying day? "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me." You may read commentaries upon that psalm, but you will never value it so well as when you are in the valley yourself. My dear departed friend said to me, ere I came away on one of my last visits, "Read me a psalm, dear pastor," and I said, "which one?" "There are many precious ones," said he, "but as I get nearer to the time of my departure, I love the 23rd best, let us have that again." "Why," I said, "you know that by heart." "Yes," said he, "it is *in* my heart too, it is most true and precious to me." And is it not so? Yet you had not seen the 23rd Psalm to be a diamond of the purest water, if you had not beheld its value to saints in their departing moments.

"Precious," again, "in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," because the precious blood is glorified. It is memorable how saints turn to the cross when they die. Not very often do you hear them speak of Christ in his glory then, it is of Christ the sufferer, Christ the substitute that they then speak. And how they delight to roll under their tongue as a sweet morsel, such texts as that one, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." With what delight do they speak about having trusted in him years ago, and how gladly will they tell you that they have not been confounded. All their hope and all their confidence lie in the crucified one alone, and they are persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him. It ought to be the object of our lives to magnify the blood of Jesus, and to speak well of it, and to recommend it to others. But oh, dear soul, if thou hast no faith in Christ's blood, one argument that ought to convince thee of the sin of unbelief above all others, is this,—that blood has afforded comfort when pains have been bitter, and consolation when death has been imminent, not in one case or a thousand, but in countless cases. Saints by myriads have died singing, for they have overcome the last enemy by the blood of the Lamb. Oh, you that were never washed in Jesus' blood, I dread to think of your dying. What will you do without the Saviour? Oh, how will you pass the terrors of that tremendous hour, with no advocate on high pleading for you there, and no blood of Christ upon you pleading for you here. Oh, fly to that cross, rest in that cross, then will you live well and die well; but, without the blood, you shall live uneasily and die wretchedly. God prevent it, for his name's sake!

Again, the deaths of believers are precious to God, because oftentimes

precious utterances are given forth in the last moments. There are little volumes extant of the death bed sayings of saints, and if ever I have mistaken the utterances of man for inspiration, it has been when I have read some of these dying speeches. No one ever mistook the brilliant utterances of Shakespeare, or the wise sayings of Bacon, or the profound thoughts of Socrates, for Scripture—everyone could see that they were earthy and of the earth; but have you never caught yourself imagining that the saying of a dying man must have been borrowed from the Scriptures, and if you have searched for it you have not found it in Cruden, nor have you discovered it anywhere in the sacred page; the voice has been so near akin to inspiration, and so true, that if it had been permitted, you would have written it in your Bibles, and made a new chapter there. Oh, what brave things do they tell of the heavenly world! What glorious speeches do they make! To some of them the veil has been thrown back, and they have spoken of things not seen as yet. They have almost declared things which it were not lawful for men to utter, and, therefore, their speech has been broken, and mysterious, like dark sayings upon a harp. We could hardly make out all they said, but we gathered that they were overwhelmed with glory, that they were confounded with unutterable bliss, that they had seen and fain would tell but must not, they had heard and fain would repeat but could not. "Did you not see the glory?" they have said, and you have replied, "The sun shines upon you through yonder window;" they have shaken their heads, for they have seen a brightness not begotten of the sun. Then have they cried, "Do you not hear it?" and we should have supposed that a sound in the street attracted them, but all was the stillness of night; silent all, except to their ear, which was ravished with the voice of harpers, harping with their harps. I shall never forget hearing a brother, with whom I had often walked to preach the gospel, say,—

> "And when ye hear my eyestrings break,
> How sweet my minutes roll;
> A mortal paleness on my cheek,
> But glory in my soul."

It must have been a grand thing to hear good Harrington Evans say to his deacons, "Tell my people, tell them I am accepted in the Beloved;" or, to hear John Rees say, "Christ in the glory of his person, Christ in the love of his heart, Christ in the power of his arm, this is the rock I stand on, and now death strike." Departing saints have uttered brave things and rare things, which have made us wish that we had been going away with them, so have they made us long to see what they have seen, and to sit down and feast at their banquet.

The last reason I shall give why the death of a saint is precious is this—because it is a precious sheep folded, a precious sheaf harvested, a precious vessel which had been long at sea brought into harbour, a precious child which had been long at school to finish his training brought home to dwell in the Father's house for ever. God the Father sees the fruit of his eternal love at last ingathered: Jesus sees the purchase of his passion at last secured: the Holy Spirit sees the object of his continual workmanship at last perfected: Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit rejoice that now the blood-bought ones are free from all inbred sin, and delivered from all temptation. The battle's fought, the battle's fought, and the victory is won for ever.

The commander's eagle eye, as he surveys the plain, watches joyously the shock of battle as he sees that his victory is sure; but when at the last the fight culminates in one last assault, when the brave guards advance for the last attack, when the enemy gathers up all the shattered relics of his strength to make a last defence, when the army marches with sure and steady tramp to the last onslaught, then feels the warrior's heart a stern o'erflowing joy, and as his veterans sweep their foes before them like chaff before the winnower's fan, and the adversaries melt away, even as the altar fat consumes away in smoke, I see the commander exulting with beaming eye, and hear him rejoicing in that last shock of battle, for in another moment there shall be the shout of victory, and the campaign shall be over, and the adversary shall be trampled for ever beneath his feet. King Jesus looks upon the death of his saints as the last struggle of their life-conflict; and when that is over, it shall be said on earth, and sung in heaven, "Thy warfare is accomplished, thy sin is pardoned, thou hast received of the Lord's hand double for all thy sins."

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Sirs, are you his saints? Preacher, thou speakest to others, hast *thou* been sanctified unto God? Answer this in the silence of thy soul. Officers of this church, are you saints or mere professors? Members of this church, are you truly saints, or are you hypocrites? You who sit in this congregation Sabbath after Sabbath, have you been washed in the blood of Jesus? are you made saints, or are you still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity? Casual visitors to this house of prayer, the same question would I press on you, are you saints of God? If not, earth and hell combined, though they are both full of anguish, could not utter a shriek that should be shrill enough to set forth the woe unutterable of the death that shall surely come upon you. Oh! ere that death overtakes you, fly to Jesus. Trust Him, trust Him now! Ere this day's sun goes down cast yourself at the feet of the crucified Redeemer, and live! The Lord grant it, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxvi.; Revelation vii. 9—17.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND.'

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."—Psalm lxxii. 12.

THIS is a royal psalm. In it you see predictions of Christ, not upon the cross, but upon the throne. In reference to his manhood as well as to his godhead, he is exalted and extolled and very high. He is the king—the king's son, truly with absolute sway, stretching his sceptre from sea to sea, and "from the river even unto the ends of the earth." It is remarkable that in this psalm which so fully celebrates the extent of his realm and the sovereignty of his government, there is so much attention drawn to the minuteness of his care for the lowly, his personal sympathy with the poor, and the large benefits they are to enjoy from his kingdom. Where Christ is highest and we are lowest, and the two meet, there is "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men." I might almost raise the question whether this psalm is more a tribute of homage to the Messiah, or a treasury of comfort for his poor subjects. We will compound the controversy by saying that as Christ here is highly exalted, so his poor needy ones are highly blessed, and while it is a blessing to them that he is exalted, it is an exaltation to him that they are blessed.

Turning to our text without further preface, we shall note in it *the special objects of great grace.* "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper;" then, *the special blessings which are allotted to them.* Here it is said that he shall deliver them, but all through the psalms there are scattered promises full of instruction and consolation all meant for them. And, lastly, *the special season which God has appointed for the dispensing of these favours.* "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth." That shall be God's time. When it is our time to cry, it shall be God's time to deliver.

I. First, then, notice THE SPECIAL OBJECTS OF GREAT GRACE. There is a three-fold description—they are needy, they are poor, they have no helper.

They are *needy*. In this they are like all the sons of men. We begin life in a needy state. We are full of needs in our infancy, and cannot help ourselves. We continue throughout life in a needy state. The very breath in our nostrils hath to be the gift of God's goodness. In him we live, and move, and have our being. And, as we grow old our needs become even more apparent. The staff on which we lean reveals to us our needs, and our infirmities all tell us what needy creatures we are. We need temporal things and we need spiritual things. Our body needs, our soul needs, our spirit needs. We need to be kept from evil; we need to be led into the paths of righteousness; we need on the outset that grace should be implanted; when implanted, we need that it be nurtured; when nurtured, we need that it be perfected and made to bring forth fruit. We are never a moment without need. We wake up, and our first glance might reveal our needs to us, and when we fall asleep it is upon a poor man's pillow, for we need that God should preserve us through the night. We have needs when we are on our knees, else where would be the energy of our prayers? We have needs when we try to sing, else how should our uncircumcised lips praise him aright? We have needs when we are relieving the needs of others, lest we become proud of our almsgiving. We have need in preaching, need in hearing; we have need in working, need in suffering, need in resting. What is our life but one long need? All men are full of needs. But God's peculiar people *feel* this need—they not only confess it is so, but they know it experimentally. They are full of needs. Once they thought that they were rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, but now, through the enlightenment of God's Spirit, they feel themselves to be naked, and poor, and miserable. Their needs were great before, but they appear now to be incalculable, more in number than the hairs of their heads. They have need of a covering for the sin of the past; they have need of help against the temptation of the present; they have need of perseverance as to the entire future. If there are any people under heaven who could claim the title of "needy," above all others, it is not the pauper in the workhouse, nor the mendicant who asks alms in the streets, but it is the child of God, for he feels himself to be so dependent that the more he gets from his great Benefactor the more he requires, and the more he must have to satisfy the enlarged desires of a heart that begins to know the will of God concerning us. Our needs are great and constant.

The second description given is that he is *poor*—"*the poor also*." A man might be needy, and be able to supply his own need. As fast as his needs arose, he might have sufficient wealth to be able to procure what he wanted. I speak merely of his temporal wants. But, with regard to us in spiritual things, we are not only needy, but we are poor to utter destitution—there is nothing within our reach that we can help ourselves with. We have need of water for our thirst, but nature's buckets are empty, and her cisterns are broken. We have need of bread, but nature's granary is bare. Like the prodigal son in a far off country, there is a famine, a mighty famine, in that land, and we are in want. We have need of clothing; we have found that we are naked, and we are ashamed, but our fig leaves will not serve us, and we

are too poor to buy a garment for ourselves. We are so poor that when a want comes it only shows us how empty the treasury is; and every want while it draws upon us meets with no fitting response; there is nothing, nothing, nothing, in human nature at its very best, that can keep pace with its own needs. Speak of self-reliance!—'tis well enough in matters of the world, but self-reliance is absolutely madness in the things of God. We have heard of self-made men, but if any man would enter heaven, he must be a God-made man from first to last, for all that can come out of human nature will still be defiled. The stream shall never mount higher than the fountain-head, and the fountain-head of human nature is pollution, total depravity. It cannot rise higher than that, let it do its best. We are very needy, and very poor. If there be any poor in all the world, who have tasted the bitter ingredients of this cup of sorrow, it is God's people. We are very needy and very poor, though we did not always think so. When the discovery was first made to us, we felt the smart as those do "who have seen better days." Once we fancied ourselves able to do our work and sure to get our wages; we did hope to merit a reward for our good conduct; and we thought it was only for us to add a little piety to our decent morals in order to be well pleasing to God and our own conscience. Ah, sirs! when we woke from these foolish dreams, and faced our own abject poverty, how ashamed we were; how we shunned the light; how we sat alone and avoided company; how fear preyed on our heart; with what anguish we chattered to ourselves, saying, "What shall I do? What shall I do?" Poor indeed we are and we know it.

Moreover, it is said they have *no helper*. Now, until God enlightens us, we seem to have a great many helpers. We fancy—perhaps we once fancied—that a priest could save us. If we have a grain of grace we have given up that idea. Perhaps we imagined that our parents would help us, that our godly ancestry might stand us in some stead:—but we have long ago been brought to the conviction that we must each stand personally before God, for only personal religion is of any value. At one time we placed some dependence upon the ministry we attended, and hoped that in some favored hour that ministry might be of use to us; but, if God has awakened us, we look higher than pulpits and preachers now. Our eyes are up towards the hills whence cometh our help, and as to all earthly things, we see no help in them. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." "He shall be like the heath in the desert—he shall not see when good cometh." The Lord grant us all to be reduced to this—that we have no helper, because when we have no helper here, he will become our helper and our salvation. Put the three words together and you have a very correct description of the awakened people of God—needy, poor, and having no helper.

We have felt this, beloved, very keenly some of us just before we looked to Christ. Oh! we can remember now when we wanted to have our sins forgiven us, we would have given all we had if we could but have found mercy;—we were full of needs. We turned all our good works over, but they had all become mouldy and worm-eaten, and they stank in our nostrils. We tried our prayers. We used to fancy if we began to pray earnestly it would all be well with us, but alas! alas!

we found our prayers to be poor comforts—broken reeds. We looked all around us, and we could get no consolation. Even Scripture did not seem to cheer us; the very promises seemed to shut their doors against us. We had no helper. Oh, do you remember then when you cried to God in your trouble, and he delivered you? I know you verified the truth of the promise in our text, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth."

Since that time, we have been equally needy; we have been making fresh proof of our indigence; and getting into straits from which we could by no means extricate ourselves. Indeed, when a Christian is richest in grace he is poorest in himself. The way to grow rich in grace is to feel your poverty. Whenever you think you have stored up a little strength, a little comfort, a little provision against a rainy day, you are pretty sure to have the trouble you bargained for, and to miss the resources you counted on. Estimate your true wealth before God by your entire dependence on him. The more you have, the less you have, and the less you have, the more you have. When you have nothing at all in yourself, then Christ is all in all to you. The perpetual condition of every child of God in himself is that of a needy and a poor and a helpless one—on the high mountains with his Lord, rejoicing in his love, yet is he even there in himself less than nothing and vanity—still poor and needy.

There have been times when we felt this very powerfully, perhaps, very painfully. Has Satan ever beset you, my brethren, with his fierce temptations? No doubt many of you have had to feel the ferocity of his attacks. Perhaps, blasphemous thoughts have been injected into your mind—dark forebodings, such as these, "God has forsaken me." Perhaps, he has said, "He has sinned himself out of the covenant—he is a castaway," and your poor little faith has tried to hold on to Christ, but it seemed as if she must be driven from her hold. While others found it as you thought easy to get to heaven, you realised the truth of the text—"The righteous scarcely are saved." You have had to fight for every inch of ground, and it seemed to you often as though you had not a spark of grace in you, not a ray of hope, and not so much as a single grain of the grace of God within your heart. Ah! and at such times you have been poor and needy, and you have had no helper. And, perhaps, at such seasons, too, temporal trouble may have come in. Whoever may go through the world without trouble, God's people never do.

> "The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown."

"In the world ye shall have tribulation" is as sure a promise as that other, "In me ye shall have peace." The trials of God's servants are sometimes extremely severe. Not a few are literally as well as spiritually poor. Hunger, privation, and embarrassment haunt their steps. And when you once come to be poor, how often does it happen that you have no helper. In the summer of prosperity your friends and acquaintances are numerous as the leaves of the forest, but in the winter of your losses and distresses, your friends are few indeed; your neighbours stand aloof, your old mates desert you, for like the wind

your trials have borne them all away as sere leaves, and you cannot find them.

But, do not think that the Lord has cast you off, because he is thus chastening you with the rod of men; take it as an exercise of your faith, and go to him and plead this promise, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

Thus I have set before you the character of God's especial objects of sovereign grace; they are poor and needy spiritually. Do you ask why is it that God selects these? Our first answer is, he giveth no account of his matters; he doeth as he will. He is a sovereign; who shall say unto him, "What doest thou?" And, in order that he may make that sovereignty clear to the sons of men, he is pleased to select those whom naturally we might expect him to pass by. Did not Jesus lift his eyes to heaven full of gratitude and say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen, but God hath chosen the poor of this world, he hath chosen the things that are despised, (and as the Apostle puts it) "Things that are not hath God chosen to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." When the chariot of the Eternal comes from above, he bids it roll far downward from the skies; he passes by the towers of haughty kings; he leaves the palaces of princes and the halls of senates, and down to the hovels of cottagers the chariot of his grace descends, for there he sees with joy and delight the objects of his everlasting love. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is the word of divine sovereignty, and God makes it true by taking the poor and the needy, and them that have no helper.

Still, if we may enquire into the reason, we see in the poor, and the needy, and the helpless, a reason for God's grace. They are the persons who are most willing to accept it, for they are the persons who most require it. Your generosity will not stand to be dictated to, but, at the same time, you usually prefer to give to those who want most. Wise mercy seeks out chief misery, and God therefore delights to give his blessings to those who need them most, not to those who fancy they deserve them—*they* shall have none of them, but those who need them, they shall have all of them.

When a soul is made to feel its own poverty, it does not set itself up in rivalry with Christ; it does not pretend to be able to help itself; it has no disputing about the terms of the gospel. A sinner, when he is thoroughly famished, has such an appetite that he eats such things as God's mercy sets before him, and he raises no question. A proud Pharisee will say, "I will not submit to this, to be saved by faith alone—I will not have it. To accept mercy as the absolute gift of heaven, irrespective of my character, I cannot endure it." The high soul of a Pharisee, I say, kicks at it. But when God has brought a man low, till like the publican he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he is glad to be saved in God's way, and no matter however humbling the plan of grace, nor how the sinner is debased and Christ exalted, the poor sinner loves to have it so. It

is a way suitable to his own wants, a way which he accepts for the very reason that God has adapted it to his position. Hence, if there be reasons they lie here, not in man's merit but on the Lord's mercy. The fact that bare misery, when touched and guided by the Spirit of God, makes the soul to open its mouth like the hard chapped soil to drink in the rain, as soon as the rain descends from above, is an argument why grace so commonly flows in this course.

In choosing to bless the poor and needy by his grace, the Lord finds for himself warm friends, those who will give him much praise, contend earnestly for his reign and for his sovereignty, and endure much obloquy for very love to his dear name. Why if the Lord were to save the Pharisees, they would hardly say, "thank you," they are so good themselves. They reckon themselves to be so excellent, that if they had salvation they would take it as a matter of course, and, like the lepers, they would never return to thank him that healed them. But when the Lord saves a great sinner, a man that feels there is nothing good in him; oh, how that man talks of it and tells it to others. He cannot take any praise to himself, he knows that he had nothing to do with it, that it is all of the grace of God. And, oh, see that man how he will stand up for the doctrines of grace! He is as the valiant men in Solomon's song, "each man with a sword on his thigh because of fear in the night;" for the doctrines of grace are not to him matters of opiuion, but matters of experience. They are dear to him as his own life. "What," says he, "is not God the giver of salvation? Is not salvation all of God, from first to last? I know it is," saith he. "Don't tell me. Whatever your arguments, however smooth may be the form and fashion of your theology, it does not tally with what I have tasted and handled and felt; for unless it is grace from first to last, I am a lost man; and, if I be indeed a child of God, then can I contend for the doctrines of grace, and will do till I die." I know I felt myself last Sunday night, after I had talked to you about the difficulties of salvation, that if ever I got to heaven, I would praise and bless God with all my soul. I felt like that good old woman who said, that if the Lord ever saved her he should never hear the last of it, for she would tell it everywhere, and publish it abroad throughout all eternity, that the Lord had done it, that he was a good and gracious God to have mercy on such a soul as she was. Now, since one object of God in bestowing his mercy is to glorify himself, he does wisely in bestowing his mercy upon the poor and the needy, and such as have no helper. The Lord give to you, my dear hearer, to be brought down to this to-night. I know many of you have been brought there and are there now. Let my text encourage and cheer you. Dear objects of Almighty love, he finds you on the dunghill, but he lifts you from it. He finds you in the dust, but is not this the song of Hannah and the song of Mary too—"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and he hath exalted them of low degree: he hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away?" It is God's way of dealing with the poor and lost; rejoice at it, it is full of encouragement to you. But I say to any of you that have never been humbled, good people, who have always been good people, you that have always kept the law from your youth up, and gone to church regularly, or to chapel regularly,

very good people—The Lord have mercy upon you, and let you see that your goodness is filthiness, that your righteousness is unrighteousness, and that the best that is in you is bad, and that the bad that is in you that you have never seen as yet will be your ruin, your eternal destruction, unless God set it before your eyes, and bring you down to loathe yourself, and feel yourself to be abominable in his sight, and abominable also in your own sight, when his law comes with power home to your souls. Thus I have spoken upon the special objects of divine grace.

II. Now, a few words upon THE SPECIAL BLESSING WHICH THE GREAT KING HAS STORED UP FOR THESE PEOPLE. Kindly look at the second verse. "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment;" so that one of the special blessings for God's poor is that they shall be judged with judgment. Alas! they are often judged with harshness; or they are judged in ignorance; or they are judged by malice—not judged by righteousness, nor by judgment. When their enemies see them, they say, "These are a broken-spirited people; they are moping and melancholy, wretched and sad." Thus hard things are spoken against them, and unkind stories are told of them. Sometimes they say they are out of their minds, and then they will insinuate that they are only hypocrites and pretenders. Slander is very busy with the children of God. God had a Son that had no fault; but he never had a son that was not found fault with. Ay, God himself was slandered in paradise by Satan: let us not expect, therefore, to escape from the venomous tongue.

One blessing, however, that will always come to God's needy ones is this—Christ will right them, he will judge them with judgment. Are you harshly spoken of at home? Don't be angry, don't provoke in return, don't answer railing with railing. "He shall judge his poor with righteousness." Leave it to him. Wait, wait, till the judgment sits, for who are these that they should judge you? Their opinion, though it is bitter as gall to your spirit, does not really affect your character or your destiny. If you are right before the Lord, through faith in Christ, they cannot make you wrong by anything they say. God judges and God knows. "He searcheth the heart and tries the reins." You remember how David, among his brethren, was much despised. He had not the appearance and the carriage that his elder brethren had, and even Samuel, the Lord's prophet, thought the others to be better than David, and said of them, "Surely the Lord hath chosen these." David was therefore despised of his brethren, but what mattered it? The Lord looked not as man looks, for man looked upon the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart. Bide your time you that are one of a family and alone. Or, if for Christ's sake you have been despised, have courage to-night and let not your spirit be bowed down. "Rejoice ye in this day and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." The King will speedily come, and when he cometh then will this word be verified. "He shall judge his people with righteousness and his poor with judgment." There is one mercy for you—to have your wrongs righted and your character cleared.

God's poor and needy ones, you will perceive, if you turn a little

further down, shall be saved from oppression. Fourth verse: "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The Lord's people are like sheep among wolves, the wolves treat them injuriously. Christ himself was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. His people may expect to be oppressed too; but they have this for their comfort, that Christ will surely deliver them, and he will break their oppressors in pieces. Are you to-night oppressed by Satan? Have you things laid to your charge by him that you know not of, and doth conscience oppress you with the remembrance of sins which have been forgiven? Have you ever believed concerning them in the atonement of Christ? Well, bow your head meekly, and go to the mercy-seat once again, pleading the precious blood, and he shall break in pieces the oppressor. There is no answer for Satan like the blood! and there is no answer for conscience but the blood. Plead it before God, plead it in your own soul, and you shall find that the great and glorious King in Zion shall, in your hearts, break in pieces the oppressor. There is another special mercy, then—help against the oppressor.

The third blessing is that of our text: "He shall deliver the needy." Deliver them! You are brought into great troubles; you shall be delivered out of them. You are just now the subject of many fears: you shall be delivered from your fears. It seems as though the enemy would soon exult over you, and put his foot upon your neck, and make an end of you; you shall be delivered. You are like a bird taken in the fowler's net, and he is ready to wring your neck and take the breath out of you; but you shall be delivered out of the hand of the fowler, and brought safely through the perils that threaten you. Oh, that we all had faith! Oh, that we all could exercise faith when in deep waters. It is a fine thing to talk about faith on land, but we want faith to swim with when we are thrown into the flood. May you, to-night, get such a grip of this precious word that you may take it before the Lord and say, "I am poor and needy, and have no helper. O God, deliver my soul now."

But, we have not exhausted the string of blessings. A little further down in the psalm, at the thirteenth verse, you will notice it is said of the King: "He shall spare the poor and needy." If he lays heavily upon them apparently, yet will he by-and-by stay his hand; if he bids one of his rough winds blow, he will save the other. As he is said to temper the wind to the shorn lamb, so will he certainly temper it to his people; they shall be afflicted, but it shall be in measure; he shall spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him: the rod shall make them smart, but shall not make them bleed; they shall be made to suffer, but they shall not be called to die. Perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; there

shall always be a gracious limit put to the blows that come from Jehovah's hand for his own people. Oh, what a mercy to be amongst his poor ones, and to feel that he will spare us; he spared not his own Son, but he will spare us, the poor and needy; he smote him with the blows of avenging justice, but concerning us it is written, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of my love shall not depart. As I have sworn that the waters shall no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." He will spare his people; he will bring them safely through, and, meanwhile, he will not let the waters be deep enough to overwhelm them.

There is one other blessing which sums up all the rest; you find it in the fourteenth verse: "He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence." Redemption belongs to the Lord's poor people. He bought with a price his poor ones, and as the ransom has all been paid, they belong to Christ, and none shall take them out of his hand. He that redeemed them by price will redeem them by power. He will, if it be needful, divide the Red Sea again to redeem his people; and, if by no usual means his servants can be preserved, he will bring unusual means into the field. There are no miracles now, we say, but if they are ever wanted for the safety of God's people, there shall be miracles as timely and as plentiful as of yore. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall never pass away." He would sooner shake the heavens themselves than suffer one of his children to famish, or utterly to perish, rest assured of that. Oh, what glorious comfort there is in all this! We shall be spared, we shall be redeemed, we shall be delivered, we shall be saved, we shall be revenged and cleared before the judgment-bar of God; and, all because the great King has made the poor and needy the special objects of his love. Oh! my soul revels in this. I cannot speak out the thoughts I feel, much less the joy that arises out of them; but what a mercy it really is, that the great King, the King who rules from the river to the ends of the earth, is the poor man's friend. I am very poor and needy and helpless to-night, but the king has made me his favourite, counts me one of his courtiers: it is the same with you, dear brother, if you too are poor and needy. He rules, and he rules on the throne for us. He is great and hath dominion, but he uses all his greatness and his dominion for us. As Joseph in Egypt was invested with power for the good of his brethren, or at least such sovereignty as he held of Pharaoh he laid out for the welfare of his father's house, so Jesus has all power and authority in heaven and earth; all might, majesty, and dominion for the good of his people. He has the king's signet ring upon his finger, but he uses it for his own beloved ones that he may enrich, and honour, and cheer, and perfect them. His glory is concerned in every

one of us. If one of the least of his people should perish, his crown would suffer damage. He is the shepherd and surety of the flock, and at his hand will the Father require all those who are committed to him. He cannot, therefore, let us perish, for then he would not be able to say at the last, "Of all that thou hast given me I have lost none." He must and will preserve us. We are wrapped up in his honour. His power, I say, his crown, his glory, his very name, as the Christ of God anointed to save sinners, all are wrapped up and intertwisted in the salvation of every poor and needy soul that is brought to rest in him.

III. And, now, our closing word is, THE SPECIAL SEASON WHEN ALL THIS SHALL BE TRUE. He shall deliver the needy *when he crieth.*

Ah! while I have been preaching there may have been some poor child of God here who has said, "I am poor and needy, and I am in great distress, but I have not been delivered." And there may be some sinner here who has said, "God has taught me my poverty and need, and I know I have no helper, but I cannot find I have been delivered." Perhaps, dear friends, you have been praying for months, praying very bitterly too, after a sort, and you have been desirous that you might find mercy. God's time, when will it come? Well, it will come when you cry. That is something more, I take it, than a mere ordinary prayer. A child asks you for something, and you may perhaps deny it; but you know there is a difference between asking for a thing and crying for a thing. Oh, when you get so that you must have it, and your heart breaks for it, when your needs are so extreme that you cannot stand up under them—well, now, it comes to this, that you must have Christ or perish. "Give me Christ or else I die," when it seems as if you could not put your prayer into words any more, that you could only fall at the foot of the cross, and say, "O God, I cannot pray, but my very soul groans after thee, to have mercy upon me," then is the time, then is the time, but not till then, when God will deliver you. The Lord loves to hear the prayers of his people, and he sometimes keeps them waiting at the posts of his door, that they may pray more. It is always a blessing for us to pray as well as to get the answer to prayer. Prayer is in itself a blessing. When the Lord hears us knock faintly at the door, he does not open; we may knock and knock again—he likes us to knock; it does us good to knock. But when it comes to this, that it is all knocking with us, and our very soul and body seem to knock, and our heart and flesh cry after God, the living God: when we shall thus come to appear before God, and open our mouth and pant vehemently for the mercy he has promised, then it will come. When thou canst not take a denial, thou shalt not have a denial. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. There is none so violent as the man who is in desperate need. There is a person who has been without

bread many hours, and he asks you for charity in the street. You would pass him by, but he is famished, and he says, "Oh give me bread! I die." He compels you to it. And such is the prayer that prevails with God. When the soul cannot wait, dare not wait, fears lest it should shut its eyes and open them in hell. Oh! God will not keep such a soul long waiting. I am always glad when I hear of convinced souls saying, "I went up into my chamber with the resolution that I would never come down again till I had found the Saviour. I always delight to hear of men and women who say, "I went upon my knees and cried to him, saying, I will not let thee go except thou bless me." He will bless thee. If thou wilt let him go, he will go, but if thou wilt not let him go, thou shalt have thy request of him. "But who am I," saith one, "that I should plead thus? I have no right to hold him thus." 'Tis true, but when a man is hungry, when a man is dying, he does not think of rights. He holds you right or wrong. His need is his right. Poor soul, go and plead your need before God. Plead your sin, tell him you are wretched and undone without his sovereign grace. Use the strange argument which David used, the strangest in all the world, "For thy name's sake, O Lord! pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Plead the very greatness of your sin as a reason for mercy; the damnable character of your sin; the certainty that you will soon be cast into hell, the fact that he might justly drive you from his presence for ever; plead all that before him; and say, "Lord, if ever the heights and depths of thy grace might be seen in saving an undeserving soul, I am just that one. If thy mercy wants to honour itself by saving the most undeserving, ill deserving, hell deserving sinner that ever lived, Lord, I am the man. If thou wantest a platform on which to erect a monument of infinite grace, that men shall stand and wonder, and angels shall gaze on it with astonishment, Lord, here am I. If thou wantest emptiness, here is one who is all emptiness. If thou as the good physician wantest a bad case, a glaring case, a desperate case, to operate on, thou wilt never have a worse case than mine. O God, turn aside and have pity upon me, and show thy mighty power." This is the way to plead. Not your merits—they will never get a hearing, but your misery, your sin, your guiltiness before God—these are the arguments. And then if faith can come in and plead the blood, and say, "Didst thou not send thy Son to save sinners?" has he not said he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance? Is it not written that the Son of Man is come to seek and to save not the good, but that which was lost? Oh! if you can plead the blood in that fashion, you will not fail. His name is the Saviour—he came to save his people from their sins. He died for the ungodly, he justifieth the ungodly—the unrighteous he makes righteous through his own merits. If you can plead this, oh, then, you shall not long wait, for though God does not deliver till we cry, yet he does deliver

when we cry. "He will deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Oh, what a mercy it is when the tide is ebbed right out, and there is nothing left. It will turn now, it will turn now. The streams of grace will turn now. When you are empty, when you are overwhelmed, when you are like a dish wiped out, and there is not anything good left in you—now will God come to you. The darkest part of the night is that which precedes the dawn of the day. When God has killed you, he will make you live. When he has wounded you through and through, he will come to your healing.

"'Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We get no *full* discharge.

But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small;
As soon as we have nought to pay,
Our God forgives us all."

May it be so now, for his name's sake. Amen.

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ANOTHER ROYAL PROCESSION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 3RD, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."—Matthew xxi. 5.

IT is not our intention to preach alone from this verse, but from the combined narrative of our Saviour's triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem, as contained in the four evangelists.

When our Lord was here on earth, he was a humble man before his foes, a weary man and full of woes, and only now and then did some glimpses of his native royalty burst forth from him; he had now and then a day in which his regal rights were assumed and his royal position was claimed. He is gone from us now as to his actual presence, but he is with us spiritually, and his spiritual presence here is not unlike what his bodily presence was in the days of his flesh. For the most part, the glory of his gospel presence is unobserved, except among his own disciples, and when perceived by others he is still despised and rejected of men. He moves up and down among our assemblies, hearing our prayers and accepting our praises, but still his honour as a prince lies concealed from the eyes of the many who know him not as king by right divine. Yet, as in those days, he had his times of clearer display and his hours of partial manifestation, even so he has now. He gives to his church her glory periods, her days of thanksgiving, her court days, and her times of exultation; and I pray God that he may grant such times as these to his church now, that in the midst of these dull years he may gird his sword upon his thigh, and ride forth gloriously in his majesty. Oh, that the streets of his Jerusalem could be gladdened by the holy pomp and sacred splendour of his gracious and triumphal presence. Beloved, the world doth well to salute righteous kings with all homage; our nation doth well to honour their well-beloved queen, whom may God long preserve! but shall Christ the King of kings be without his homage? I must confess I am jealous for him, jealous with a burning jealousy that the streets should blaze with splendour for the Queen of Britain, and that so little should be done in honour of the King immortal, eternal. Lo, the shouts of the multitude rend the skies for

earthly princes, and I grudge them not; but, should there be no upliftings of joyful voices for the Prince of Peace? Why this lethargy in his church? Why such slender zeal for the Chief among ten thousand? Why should not earth and heaven ring with his praises? If I might say so much as a sentence to-day that should lead the tribes to speak a word to bring the King back again to his own; if I might excite in any soul a fervent desire that Christ's kingdom should more speedily come, and his throne should be exalted more on high in the midst of his people, I should be thrice happy. To that end shall I endeavour to speak this day. Oh, for the anointing of the Holy Ghost to aid me therein.

Our points of consideration this morning will be, first, that *Christ hath even now his glorious days among men;* and, secondly, that *when those glorious days come honours are paid to him similar to those described by the evangelists on the occasion of his entrance into Jerusalem.* In the third place I shall remind you that *he is wont on such occasions to perform the same mighty deeds;* and in the close of our discourse we shall have to observe that *even on those brilliant occasions, "all is not gold that glitters."*

I. First, then, here is a very pleasant consideration, that THE LORD JESUS HAS, EVEN NOW, BRIGHT AND GLORIOUS DAYS OF SPECIAL MANIFESTATION IN HIS CHURCH. He has ridden into his Jerusalem again and again in the history of the gospel. We call these times revivals; and in yet more scriptural language they are known as "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." They usually occur—(and I shall try to follow the narrative in all the remarks I make), they usually occur *after the Lord has visited his beloved and quickened them.* He came into Jerusalem after he had raised Lazarus from the dead. His omnipotent voice had said, "Lazarus, come forth!" and Lazarus came forth, and the grave clothes were loosed from him; then and for that cause did the people come to meet our Lord with palm branches. First doth the Lord speak to his Church and he saith to her, "Come forth out of the grave of thy sloth and thine indifference." He saith, "Loose her, take away the bands of her sloth and her conventionalism, and set her free," and then when he hath restored among his church a people whom he loves, and granted to them renewed vigour of spiritual life in the power of his resurrection, then it is that the sign of the glory of the Son of Man is revealed. I despair, beloved, of any revival being of the slightest value which does not begin with the church of God. It never can originate outside and work into the interior, this is not the rule of spiritual life; it must commence with the spiritual in the midst of the church, it must next quicken the mass of the discipleship, and then it shall spread to those who are without, and in ever widening circles its power shall be felt. But, revival must begin at home. Hear ye this ye professors, and take heed lest ye hinder Christ of his glory. Hear this ye who profess to be members of his church, and beware lest ye be like the damp wood which will not kindle, and therefore no fire burneth among the sons of men. Oh, let not the Well-beloved find his worst hindrances in his own household; let not the glory of Christ be obscured most by those who stand nearest to him, and ought therefore to be most jealous for his holy name. Yet so I fear full often it is;

the children of Ephraim being armed and carrying bows turn back in the day of battle, and so Israel's God is dishonoured. Lazarus must arise; our death must be shaken off, and then shall the Lord Jesus greatly triumph.

The Lord was pleased to ride in state *when his disciples were obedient to him.* Note well their implicit obedience, for it is a sure prophecy of glorious displays in the church. He said to two of his disciples, "Go," and they went; and others of them having his commission performed their errands without hesitation. Alas! I fear the disobedience of the church often hinders the advance of the gospel. The disciples do not at this day, as they did then, the things which Jesus commanded them. One of them saith, "I will follow Paul, another I will follow Cephas"—would God we laid aside all party leadership, and were only led by the Master himself! One saith, "This institution is venerable if it be not scriptural," and another saith, "I believe this ritual to be impressive and instructive, even if it be not ordained of God;" and so men excuse their will-worship. Oh, that we could lay all these things aside, and recognise that the law of the house is the law which the Master makes, and not the law which the servant may invent. It is time that we laid our perverse likes and our dislikes, our whims and our fancies, our opinions and even our more sober judgments, at the foot of him who is the only King of Zion; for be assured of this, his sacred majesty will not manifest its glory to disobedient disciples, except it be in a way of terror. Take heed, then, O ye who stand in his courts by your profession, and are his servants in name, that ye labour to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven, cheerfully, speedily, exactly, and with reverence to his every word, for otherwise he will veil his glory, and do but few mighty works among you.

Another indication of our Lord giving us glory days will be found in *the prompt and cheerful sacrifice which his disciples will make.* On the day of his entrance into Jerusalem, the owner of the ass and its colt cheerfully surrendered them when he heard that the Lord had need of them: the disciples who brought the ass did not spare their own contributions, for they took their garments and piled them on the ass; and others would not be debarred from their share of homage, for they spread their garments in the way, counting it their greatest honour to be bare-backed for Christ. All hands contributed, for all hearts were warm. The willing offerings of the people carpeted the road for the Son of David when he went through his metropolis to his cathedral. None appeared before him empty; there was no withholding on that day. A generous spirit had seized upon all his followers. And mark this word, for their is more of solemn truth in it than some will think, Christ Jesus hath often taken away the power of his Spirit from the church because of the covetousness of many professors, who have grudged the cause of God what they ought spontaneously and cheerfully to have offered. They have said of sacrifice to the Lord, "what a weariness it is!" They have robbed God in tithes and in offerings. They have counted the free-will offering to be a tax, when they ought to have considered it to be an honour and a privilege to be allowed to give to the Lord's cause. God has been insulted by miserly gifts and penurious contributions. What they would have been ashamed to offer to the meanest

among princes they have presented to the Lord. How often have I blushed as I have heard in prayer that text, "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Why have you blushed? say you. Because seldom or never do I hear that text quoted correctly, its point is dexterously turned aside. What is the proof which the Lord puts before his people in that text? How doth he say, "Prove me now?" By your prayers? No. By your good works? No. But the text is, "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts," and so on. That is the peculiar test to which God brings his people, and in that test, alas, how many fail therein. They buy him no sweet cane with money, neither is he filled with their sacrifices. They will give their words in plenty, their lip homage in floods, but if it comes to their substance they will have none of it. How few Christians have ever read this text and understood it, "Sell what thou hast and give alms." Their almsgiving has never come to that; they have given but the cheese parings and the candle ends to Christ; they never knew they had given them, they made no sacrifice to do so. Many do not give to Jesus so much in a year as it costs to clean their shoes. Christ's cause costs them not half the hire of the most menial servant in their kitchens. Is not this a crying evil, to be answered for by those who are guilty of it? How can we expect the kingdom to come and the cause of Christ to grow while in these days of unreal profession Christ's followers deny him his due, and straiten the exchequer of his church. If no garments strew the road, and no man gives up his colt, how shall the prince celebrate a triumph?

But we must pass on from that; those three things are, however, very significant signs of Christ's glory days; a quickened people, an obedient discipleship, and a general self-sacrifice. Let us see these, and we shall be sure that one of Christ's glory days has come.

Furthermore, the glory of Christ is seen *when Jesus Christ is publicly proclaimed as King.* Evermore, beyond doubt, we acknowledge Christ to be King in the church; I hope all believers are sound upon that point: but in what holes and corners doth the church whisper out the truth, which he hath told us in the closet. Years ago, many of the churches were quite content to hide their light under any bushel, meeting in the queerest courts, and lanes, and alleys, where nobody but an angel and themselves could ever find them out. This content with obscurity is contrary to the genius of the gospel; let moles and bats seek out the hidden places and dwell therein; the children of light are not ashamed, but make it their glory that these things are not done in a corner. It is a grand day for the kingdom of Christ when the King is proclaimed in the streets, when the great trumpet is sounded, when the disciples stand in the highways, and the voice of wisdom is lifted up in the chief places of concourse, at the going in of the gates. Then are things well ordered when Zion lifts up her voice, yea, lifts it up with strength, and saith unto the cities of Judah, "Behold your God." Our commission as preachers is to every creature, and, therefore, the more public the teaching of the gospel the better. Truly, there was grace in the earth when in popish times God was loved by men in quiet, and when Christ was worshipped

by little knots in secret; but that was a grander day when Luther stood out in the open air and said that Christ was King, and salvation was by his blood. Then, when all over Europe the crowds began to gather in the fields, or beneath the gospel oak, or in the public squares, to listen to the men who not in a corner, not with bated breath, but aloud and boldly, before them all declared that antichrist must come to an end, and that the Lord Jesus Christ must be exalted, and faith in him must be declared to be the salvation of the sons of men, oh, it was then that Christ and his church beheld a glorious day. Blessed be God for the Reformation, but we must not rest in faded laurels, we need new victories. We desire the blessings of the gospel to be extended; and we ought to pray that the gospel may have free course and be glorified, that every street may ring with its charming music, that every alley and court may brighten with salvation, ay, and that not a house in London may be left without knowing that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It is a notable day when in the great gatherings of the people the Lord Jesus is declared to be the Lord of all.

On such days, one part of the glory consists in *many going forth to meet Christ.* I wish I might live to see the facts of the gospel narrative fulfilled spiritually before our eyes. The people in Jerusalem took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Jesus, glad that he was coming into the city, willing to swell the pomp of his entrance; and even thus God moves often on bright days upon the mass of the people, making them willing to receive the gospel. There are times when the preacher feels that he is sowing on stony ground, but on other days when God's Spirit is abroad, the soil seems broken up, friable, ready to receive the grain, and the seed suddenly springs up, and a speedy harvest is produced. Pray, my brethren, that God would move our fellow countrymen to go forth to meet King Jesus. Pray that there may come a great wave of religious thought over the minds of the people. God can cause it; he has the keys of human hearts, and can secretly guide them according to his will. Pray that there may be a great religious movement among the people, for then we may look for one of the days of the Son of Man, as the days of heaven upon earth.

Then, too, as another sign, we shall see *enthusiasm prevailing on all sides.* When Christ rode through Jerusalem, it was not possible for men to be cold at the sight of his majesty. Those who hated burned with malignity, but those who loved him were full of flaming affection towards him. It is one speciality of Christ's character that men can scarcely be indifferent in his presence; he that is not with him is against him. What enthusiasm there was in the crowd that day when the city rang again. The children climbed the trees and threw down the branches; their parents waved them in triumph and then cast them in the roadway that the Saviour might ride over them. The shouts were loud and long, the day was full of gladness to the many. Ah, and it is a mark of Christ's presence when the church becomes enthusiastic. We sometimes hear complaints about revivals being too exciting, perhaps the censure is deserved, but I would like to see a little of the fault. This age does not generally sin in the direction of being too excited concerning divine things. We have erred so long on

the other side that, perhaps, a little excess in the direction of fervour might not be the worst of all calamities; at any rate, I would not fear to try it. Doubtless our Lord's presence, like the rising of the sun scatters heat as well as light on all sides. Oh, to be scorched by that sun, to be parched with that heat. Blessed would they be who should be guilty of too great a love for him, convicted of too consuming a zeal for his glory. I would gladly die of that heavenly malady.

On that triumphal day, beloved brethren, where there was no enthusiasm, *there was inquiry*, for all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" When our Lord grants revivals to his church, the congregations and the multitude outside begin to ask, "Wherefore this stir? what meaneth all this? who is this Christ, and what is his salvation?" This spirit of inquiry is eminently desirable. It is just now a matter to be sought for by importunate prayer. Would God that all this vast metropolis were stirred by the inquiry, "Who is this?" and that everywhere men said, "What is this gospel about which so much noise is made?" May the Lord in his mercy move men's hearts as the trees of the wood are shaken with the wind. This is that shaking which the prophet saw in the valley of vision when bone came together to its bone, before the breath of the Spirit made the slain to live. Be instant day and night O ye chosen men of God, and pray that like Nineveh in the days of Jonah this whole city may be moved by the preaching of the word.

The strange thing about the matter was that when Jesus entered Jerusalem, *all his enemies were quiet.* He rode publicly through the streets where Herod and Pilate held their courts, yet they did not attempt to molest him. The Romans were very jealous of their authority, they were always prompt to seize upon any person who pretended to be a king, and yet not a solitary pretorian guard laid his rough hand upon the King of the Jews, neither did Herod's men of war appear upon the scene. It does not appear that any information was carried to head quarters concerning this singular procession, neither was it laid to the Lord's charge by his enemies on his trial. As for the scribes and Pharisees, they did no more than bark a little, but bite they could not, for they feared the people. That day every foeman cowered down before the Lord, like dogs when a lion roareth. When he entered the temple he was unattended by armed followers, he took with him no sword, but simply a scourge made of small cords, and yet with that slight weapon he chased out the buyers and sellers, overturning their tables, and overthrowing the seats of them that sold doves; and yet it does not appear that any resistance was made to him; he was Lord of the hour. Against him durst not a dog move his tongue; in the presence of the King of Zion the enemy was as still as a stone till he and his people had passed through the city, and the day of the royal pomp was over. In like manner it is remarkable that, in times when the Lord is blessing his church, he restrains the wrath of his enemies or causes it to praise him. He hath power to make the proudest humble themselves, and the most stout-hearted bow their necks, and he uses that power to the glory of his name.

While I am thus describing what the glorious days of Christ are

when they dawn upon us, surely you, my dear fellow members, are all pleading with God and earnestly praying, "O king of grace, grant us one of these royal days in this church;" and you, the members of other churches, are crying, "Would God that Jesus would come to our town in that fashion, and that he would rule in our church, after that manner." Let us pray for it unanimously and continually, and let us be of good cheer, for Jesus loves his church and he will give her what her heart is set upon. Let us plead with him for it, and we shall yet see the day in which the many shall cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

II. Bnt, time would fail us if we lingered here, and therefore we pass to the second head, which is this, that ON THESE GLORY DAYS OF JESUS CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH, LIKE HONORS ARE PAID TO HIM NOW AS THEN.

And first, *he is at this time as loudly praised and as greatly rejoiced in among his people as he was then.* They clapped their hands and called him "Blessed;" and the whole multitude of his disciples rejoiced with an exceeding loud voice, and cried, "Hosanna, Hosanna." Oh, beloved, we are dull enough when Christ is away; how can the children of the bridechamber rejoice when the bridegroom is gone from them; but when his Spirit comes with power into our midst, how can we fast? Oh, then our hearts rejoice, and leap along in glee like the long frozen brooks when the soft breath of spring hath set them free. Send us but a revival, O God, and Ready-to-halt shall leap upon his crutches, and Much-afraid, and Fearing, and Despondency, shall sing with holy mirth. No joy is like the joy of Christ's presence with his people. Oh, that we might have it! Bickerings soon cease, murmurings come to an end, complaints of one another, and of God's providence are all hushed; the sense that Jesus Christ is with his people drowns every note of sorrow, and every heart is tuned to loudest notes of thankfulness. O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is be stirred up, his holy name to magnify and bless, on that auspicious day, when the power of Jesus Christ is revealed in the city of his choice. It is a gladsome time, a time of singing, a time of shouting, a time of exultation, and of intense delight when we go forth to meet our King Solomon to crown him anew. I need not say to you, should he favour us with such a delightful period, let us rejoice and be glad in him, for you would be sure to do it. When the Lord turns again the captivity of Sion, then is our mouth filled with singing and our tongue with laughter.

The point that I shall dwell upon here would be that Christ's peculiar honour lay not only in the joy and rejoicing which flowed around him, but in *the multitude who felt the contagion of that joy.* It was said by those who saw the pageant of last week that the great sight of all was the multitude; the thing to look at and to wonder at was the crowd, the dense, far-reaching, eager, surging crowd. And, surely, in Christ's glory days the thing which brings him much honour is the crowd, the multitude; for when he makes bare his arm, and his gospel is preached with power, the multitude are sure to listen to his gospel, and men say, "Behold the whole world is gone after him." It may seem strange and unaccountable, but so it is, that the very gospel which is opposed by men has a strange attraction for their ears, they cannot help hearing it; and though to this day there is an opposition in the human heart to the

truth as it is in Jesus, yet is it a remarkable fact that men love to hearken to it. The numerical strength of Christ's church lies still in the multitude; the common people hear him gladly. Though it was known that Christ was coming, the princes did not go to meet him, the priests did not go to meet him; there were no long files of Jewish nobility to greet their King; but the people went in their thousands, the masses cheered him. I dare say the Pharisees called them the mob, the rabble, the unwashed. Yes, and let it stand for fact, "this man receiveth sinners;" he is the people's King, the helper of the poor and needy. The poor of this world have been rich in faith in him. In the old days of persecution, and of burning, who were the men that played the man most nobly at the stake? Here and there a bishop and a noble did so, but the rank and file of the heroes were from the poor or the middle class. There was one great man, with an unworthy right hand that recanted, and yet did well at the last; but the poor weavers of Colchester, and the cobblers of Bow, never recanted at all, but gloried in being made a burnt-offering for the truth. Wherever the gospel has been mainly upheld by the great ones of the earth it has had little success. Take, for instance, Spain and Italy, the converts of the Reformation there nearly all belonged to the higher ranks, and ere long its doctrines became extinct, but it lived among German peasants and British artizans. The valiant of Israel still come from the loom, the smithy, the plough, and the bench. Wherever the gospel entrenches itself among the common people, the devil himself cannot destroy it: it is then like a lion in its own forest, and none can drive it forth. The priests and the mighty ones may uphold what cause they will, but if the people are for King Jesus, his advocates have no need to blush. It is this day the glory of Christ that he doth save the poor and the needy, and that he is the prince of the multitude. "I have exalted," saith the Lord, "one chosen out of the people"—Jesus is the people's Christ, the people's man. He still hath honour out of the mouth of those whom others despise, for he hath chosen the base things of the world and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are. Here was a part of Christ's glory.

And then, observe, that, on that day it was Christ's glory that *he received all sorts of homage from all kinds of people.* As I have already said, he who had a beast that Christ might ride upon cheerfully surrendered it: he who had no beast had at least a garment, and he gave it; and he who was so poorly clad, that his best garment when spread in the way might seem rather to insult than to honour the king, gave a branch from the tree. He who could brought a palm, which probably he had to purchase with money; but those who could not buy palm branches, climbed the trees that were common and grew by the highway, and threw the branches down. I suppose these were branches of olives, for they were hard by the Mount of Olives: let the fatness of the earth honour him! There were also branches of the figtree, for Bethphage was the house of figs: let the sweetness of the earth honour him! Doubtless there were branches of the cedars: let the honour and strength of the earth adore him! There were branches of the myrtle: let all earth's honour and victory glorify him! I do not read that Christ rejected so much as one attempt to do him honour. He rebuked no disciple and silenced no child. Oh, in

the day when Christ is glorious all his people try to serve him, each one brings his portion; the prince brings much, but the peasant brings his share, and the Lord accepts them all. No Christian when the Lord is abroad shirks his duty or forgets to bring his sacrifice, nor doth the Lord reject so much as one honest gift of a sincere heart.

And, on that day, oh, it was a sweet thing to notice and delightful to remember, it will always be so when Christ is glorious, *the little ones were conspicuous.* Did not the boys in the Temple cry "Hosanna! Hosanna!" and their throats were not hoarse half so soon as their fathers' were. They kept up the mirth of that gladsome day—a joyful holiday was it for them. Even thus where there is true grace working powerfully in a church I always expect to see young converts. Boys and girls will be brought to Christ in any true revival, and where they are not, methinks we have good reason to suspect that the movement is not genuine, for had it been the work of the Spirit of God, the little ones would have been suffered to come unto him as well as those of older growth. Oh, may such honours be heaped on Christ in this Tabernacle! Would God I could hear the little ones say, "Hosanna!" while their fathers and their mothers join the song. The Lord grant that the Sabbath-school may send up a noble regiment for the King's army. Oh, that on all sides, you men with wealth, and you men with none, you with great gifts, and you with few, you with much time and leisure, and you with scarce an hour to call your own, you aged men and you youngsters, would unite in magnifying the Redeemer. Oh, that I could see you all strewing somewhat in the way of Christ to glorify him in the midst of his church.

III. But, I must not dwell there, though the theme is very tempting, but notice that when Christ comes into the church HE EXECUTES THE SAME DEEDS AS HE DID THEN.

What was the first thing he did that we observe? He was seated on the colt, and as he rode along and heard the shouts of the people, I have no doubt that a smile was over his face, and when he saw the little ones in all their ardour, he looked at them with love; but, on a sudden, just as he came where he could see Jerusalem, though it was the day of his triumph he stopped, and all around could see that some mighty emotion was swelling his heart to bursting, and at last the tears coursed adown those cheeks, and he burst into this lament, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day." I know that ever where Christ is in the church in the power of his Spirit, *compassion for souls becomes very prominent.* Christ weeps through his people's eyes, and yearns through his children's hearts. He makes them pitiful and full of compassion. They cannot bear it that men should be damned, it grieves them that the day of a gracious visitation should come, and yet so many should reject Christ. Oh, my brethren, you who live near to Christ, and feel a sympathy with him, ask the Lord to give you heart-ache over dying souls; ask him to make you feel an anguish because men will not come unto him that they might have life, but will persist in committing spiritual suicide, by putting far from them life eternal. Oh, that we might see a holy passion for souls in the church, for that would be a blessed sign of rich grace.

At the same time, on that very same occasion, there was conspicuous *the*

judgments of Christ, for his compassion did not permit him to keep back the tidings of future punishment. He said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." I have noted that in genuine revivals, the preachers of God's truth are not backward in preaching the threatenings, as well as the promises. We are told that men are drawn to Christ by love, and the statement is true; but, at the same time, "knowing the terrors of the Lord," we are to persuade men, and not to keep back from them the evil tidings. Even Christ with weeping eyes and tender heart does not hesitate to tell Jerusalem of its coming destruction, and I believe it is a token that Christ is in the church when those terrible things of his are not kept back to please the popular taste; when there is no trying to cut them down and moderate them, in order to make the wrath to come look less terrible than it is. It must be thundered out again and again, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It must be told the sinner that if he goeth on in his iniquity, he shall be driven away from hope and salvation, "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Christ is not present in an unfaithful church, and this is a point upon which some churches are very apt to grow unfaithful. We must deliver the whole truth, even the dark side of it as well as that which smiles with mercy, and Christ is not present unless it be so. The sympathy of Jesus led him, as it should lean us, to be lovingly honest with the sons of men.

But, you notice in the reading that our Lord, when he rode through the streets of his metropolis, went straight away to the cathedral gate, and when he entered there *he began to purge the temple*. With the scourge in his hand he smote right and left, and he overthrew the tables of those that were changing the shekels, and he cast out the cages of doves that were stored there for merchandise. Even thus doth Christ do. No church can remain long impure with Jesus in her midst; his presence brings reformation, things tolerated before become intolerable where he is. While a church is without the Spirit of God it will keep in its old way, it will plead precedent, it will endure grievous abuses, it will make excuses for this, and excuses for that; but, let the Lord once come, and out the hawkers and hucksters must go, tables, money-bags, doves, and all. He will not have them in his house of prayer; bag and baggage they must go when he comes in, and he only in his truth and power must reign in the midst of his own church. I do not believe we shall thoroughly purify any church by Acts of Parliament, nor by reformation associations, nor by agitation, nor by any merely human agency. No hand can grasp the scourge that can drive out the buyers and sellers, but that hand which once was fastened to the cross. Let the Lord do it and the work will be done, for it is not of man, nor shall man accomplish it.

Then, when Christ had purged the church, the next thing was *to heal the sick* who came to him in the temple. The place which might not be

a mart was allowed to be an hospital. So the glory days of Christ are always notable for the great cures that he works; the sons of men receive lasting benefits, and are relieved of grievous maladies. Eyes are opened, understandings are enlightened. Infirmities are removed, the lame walk. Wills are subdued; hearts are cleansed; and natures are changed. Where Jesus comes, salvation follows with all the train of blessings which it includes.

And, then, we find that that day *his foes were all confounded.* They came to meet him with their questions, but he soon answered them; and what did they say the one to the other? "Perceive ye how we prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him." O master, give us to see such times as these: our soul now longeth for them. Cause thou our enemies to lament, and say, "We thought we had put down these old doctrines, but we have prevailed nothing, behold the multitude is moved by them." The devil thought in England years ago, that the gospel light was put out; he had lulled the Church of England and Dissenters too into a deep sleep, and Arianism and all sorts of errors had spread all over the land: but the Lord touched the heart of Whitefield, and Wesley, and the godly ones; the Spirit of God came down, the multitude heard the Gospel gladly, and many an enemy of Christ as he stood at his window and saw the streets thronged to hear those men as they never had been thronged before, and heard the song borne on the distant breezes of the wide open spaces outside the towns and villages, said, "Why, after all, we have not put this thing down: though we fancied we had destroyed it." There is hope of this celestial tree; if it be cut down it will sprout again; at the scent of water it will bud. This child is not dead, but sleepeth. A certain vainglorious party of pretenders to intellect and culture tell us now that the old Puritanic faith is nearly extinct; there are only a few of us ignorant people who now hold the same truths as John Owen, John Bunyan, Goodwin, and Charnock; but all the elite of the world, those who have all the "sweetness and light" to themselves, the thinkers, the mental gentility have all been sensible enough to give their votes for something more suitable to the times. In the name of God, we shall show them the difference yet, and by his Spirit we will din their ears with the gospel ram's horn till they and their Jericho come down in a common ruin. The evangelical doctrine which shook Europe will shake it yet again, and England shall yet know that the self-same truth, for which her martyrs died, and for which her Puritans fought on many a well-contested field, shall break the rationalism and ritualism of this land in pieces yet, and all else that standeth in the way of the true gospel of the living God. We are not afraid nor discouraged, but we cry mightily unto the King that we may once more lift up a shout because of his presence, for then human philosophy shall be ashamed, and old Rome shall know, and all the cubs of the beast of Rome shall know, that the Lord liveth, and his invincible truth shall win the day.

IV. Now, lastly, I said that even on the occasion, when Christ came into Jerusalem, ALL WAS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERED, and so we must not expect it to be in any revival of religion. They said, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" till the heavens rang again, but there was an undercurrent, there were Pharisees and men of other classes with them,

grizzling and snarling, and trying there and then to devise a plan by which to destroy the Lord, and there was Judas at that very time plotting, planning, ready to sell his Master. However, what did that signify? The worst thing of all was this, that those same tongues which were that day crying "Hosanna!"—oh, shame to our humanity that we should have to mention it!—those same tongues which cried "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," within that self-same week said, "Crucify him! crucify him!" I say not all, but some. It was the mob of Jerusalem that brought him in as their king, but when they found that he would not assume the throne, and that he spoke of a spiritual kingdom, and not an earthly one, then they were instant with loud voices, saying, "Let him be crucified! let him be crucified!" Expect not, therefore, when many hearts are impressed with the gospel, that all will be steadfast towards Christ. Do not reckon that every pious feeling will end in genuine conversion. The florist does not expect all his slips to become shrubs. Look ye at the trees which, in a few short days, will be smothered with blossoms and glorious with beauty; do you expect those blossoms all to become fruit? No gardener thinks that such a thing can be. He understands that full many of those flowers will wither, will be blown off in the March gales, or smitten by the evening's frost. He looks for fruit proportionate to the blossoming, but not to a fruit that shall be equal to the full promise of the bloom. And so, think not ill of Christ's great days, because they seem to inexperienced eyes greater on the surface than they are. Thank God there is a residuum of reality, be thankful for that; but, do not be disappointed, much less scoff, because it is not all that you had hoped it was. If some be saved we are glad; if I had a thousand professed converts, and only a hundred of them turned out to be genuine, I would be more grateful than if all my converts were genuine, and there was only half a dozen of them. Large dealers look for some losses and bad debts, and yet hope to gain much in the long run. So long as I do but get the number of real converts, I will forget, and my heart shall outlive, the disappointment of having expected more. Go on, brethren, go on praying, hoping, working, for the Lord will bless his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace. Amen and Amen.

As a very large number of friends from a distance desire occasionally to attend the Tabernacle, but do not like to encounter the crowds at the doors, the deacons have resolved to issue early admission tickets, which will admit the holder before the general public, during the month of issue. They will be purchasable at the price of one shilling, and can be had by letter, enclosing twelve penny stamps, and one half-penny stamp for postage, of Mr. C. Blackshaw, Tabernacle, Newington Butts.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"PRAY WITHOUT CEASING."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 10TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Pray without ceasing."—1 Thessalonians v. 17.

THE position of our text is very suggestive. Observe what it follows. It comes immediately after the precept, "Rejoice evermore;" as if that command had somewhat staggered the reader, and made him ask, "How can I always rejoice?" and, therefore, the apostle appended as answer, "Always pray." The more praying the more rejoicing. Prayer gives a channel to the pent-up sorrows of the soul, they flow away, and in their stead streams of sacred delight pour into the heart. At the same time the more rejoicing the more praying; when the heart is in a quiet condition, and full of joy in the Lord, then also will it be sure to draw nigh unto the Lord in worship. Holy joy and prayer act and react upon each other.

Observe, however, what immediately follows the text: "In everything give thanks." When joy and prayer are married their first born child is gratitude. When we joy in God for what we have, and believingly pray to him for more, then our souls thank him both in the enjoyment of what we have, and in the prospect of what is yet to come. Those three texts are three companion pictures, representing the life of a true Christian, the central sketch is the connecting link between those on either side. These three precepts are an ornament of grace to every believer's neck, wear them every one of you, for glory and for beauty. "Rejoice evermore;" "pray without ceasing;" "in everything give thanks."

But we cannot spare any time for the consideration of the context, but must advance to the precept in hand. Our text though exceedingly short is marvellously full, and we will discuss it under the following heads. We shall ask and answer four questions. *What do these words imply?* Secondly, *What do they actually mean?* Thirdly, *How shall we obey them?* And, fourthly, *Why should* WE *especially obey them?*

I. WHAT DO THESE WORDS IMPLY? "Pray without ceasing." Do they not imply that *the use of the voice is not an essential element in prayer?* It would be most unseemly even if it were possible for us to

continue unceasingly to pray aloud. There would of course be no opportunity for preaching and hearing, for the exchange of friendly intercourse, for business, or for any other of the duties of life; while the din of so many voices would remind our neighbours rather of the worship of Baal than that of Zion. It was never the design of the Lord Jesus that our throats, lungs, and tongues should be for ever at work. Since we are to pray without ceasing, and yet could not pray with the voice without ceasing, it is clear that audible language is not essential to prayer. We may speak a thousand words which seem to be prayer, and yet never pray; on the other hand, we may cry into God's ear most effectually, and yet never say a word. In the book of Exodus God is represented as saying to Moses, "Why criest thou unto me?" And yet it is not recorded that Moses had uttered so much as a single syllable at that time. It is true that the use of the voice often helps prayer. I find, personally, that I can pray best when alone if I can hear my own voice; at the same time it is not essential, it does not enter at all into the acceptability, reality, or prevalence of prayer. Silence is as fit a garment for devotion as any that language can fashion.

It is equally clear that *the posture of prayer is of no great importance*, for if it were necessary that we should pray on our knees we could not pray without ceasing, the posture would become painful and injurious. To what end has our Creator given us feet, if he desires us never to stand upon them? If he had meant us to be on our knees without ceasing, he would have fashioned the body differently, and would not have endowed us with such unnecessary length of limb. It is well to pray on one's knees; it is a most fitting posture; it is one which expresses humility, and when humility is truly felt, kneeling is a natural and beautiful token of it, but, at the same time, good men have prayed flat upon their faces, have prayed sitting, have prayed standing, have prayed in any posture, and the posture does not enter into the essence of prayer. Consent not to be placed in bondage by those to whom the bended knee is reckoned of more importance than the contrite heart.

It is clear, too, from the text, that *the place is not essential to prayer*, for if there were only certain holy places where prayer was acceptable, and we had to pray without ceasing, our churches ought to be extremely large, that we might always live in them, and they would have to comprise all the arrangements necessary for human habitations. If it be true that there is some sanctity this side of a brick-wall more than there is on the other side of it, if it be true that the fresh air blows away grace, and that for the highest acceptance we need groined arches, pillars, aisle, chancel, and transept, then farewell, ye green lanes, and fair gardens, and lovely woods, for henceforth we must, without ceasing, dwell where your fragrance and freshness can never reach us. But this is ridiculous; wherefore I gather that the frequenting of some one particular place has little or nothing to do with prayer; and such a conclusion is consistent with the saying of Paul upon Mars' Hill, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

"Pray without ceasing." That precept at one stroke *overthrows the idea of particular times* wherein prayer is more acceptable or more proper

than at others. If I am to pray without ceasing, then every second must be suitable for prayer, and there is not one unholy moment in the hour, nor one unaccepted hour in the day, nor one unhallowed day in the year. The Lord has not appointed a certain week for prayer, but all weeks should be weeks of prayer: neither has he said that one hour of the day is more acceptable than another. All time is equally legitimate for supplication, equally holy, equally accepted with God, or else we should not have been told to pray without ceasing. It is good to have your times of prayer; it is good to set apart seasons for special supplication—we have no doubt of that; but we must never allow this to gender the superstition that there is a certain holy hour for prayer in the morning, a specially acceptable hour for prayer in the evening, and a sacred time for prayer at certain seasons of the year. Wherever we seek the Lord with true hearts he is found of us; whenever we cry unto him he heareth us. Every place is hallowed ground to a hallowed heart, and every day is a holy day to a holy man. From January to December the calendar has not one date in which prayer is forbidden. All the days are red-letter days, whether Sabbaths or week days they are all accepted times for prayer. Clear, then, is it from the text, that the voice, the posture, the place, the time—none of them enter into the essence of prayer, or else, in this case, we should be commanded to perform an impossibility, which we are quite certain is not after the manner of the Lord our God.

There is one other thing implied in the text, namely, that *a Christian has no right to go into any place where he could not continue to pray.* Pray without ceasing? Then I am never to be in a place where I could not pray without ceasing. Hence, many worldly amusements without being particularised may be judged and condemned at once. Certain people believe in ready-made prayers, cut and dried for all occasions, and, at the same time, they believe persons to be regenerated in baptism though their lives are anything but Christian; ought they not to provide prayers for all circumstances in which these, the dear regenerated but graceless sons and daughters of their church, are found? As, for instance, a pious collect for a young prince or nobleman, who is about to go to a shooting-match, that he may be forgiven for his cruelty towards those poor pigeons who are only badly wounded and made to linger in misery, as also a prayer for a religious and regenerated gentleman who is going to a horserace, and a collect for young persons who have received the grace of confirmation, upon their going to the theatre to attend a very questionable play. Could not such special collects be made to order? You revolt at the idea. Well, then, have nothing to do with that which you cannot ask God's blessing upon, have nothing to do with it, for if God cannot bless it, you may depend upon it the devil has cursed it. Anything that is right for you to do you may consecrate with prayer, and let this be a sure gauge and test to you, if you feel that it would be an insult to the majesty of heaven for you to ask the Lord's blessing upon what is proposed to you, then stand clear of the unholy thing. If God doth not approve, neither must you have fellowship therewith.

These matters are clearly implied in the precept, "Pray without ceasing."

II. But now, WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN? If it does not mean we are to be always on our knees, nor always saying prayers, nor always in church or in meeting, and does not mean that we are to consider any day as unfit for praying, what then? The words mean, first, *a privilege;* secondly, *a precept*—"Pray without ceasing." Our Lord Jesus Christ in these words assures you that you may pray without ceasing. There is no time when you may not pray. You have here permission given to come to the mercy-seat when you will, for the veil of the Most Holy place is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and our access to the mercy-seat is undisputed and indisputable. Kings hold their levees upon certain appointed days, and then their courtiers are admitted; but the King of kings holds a constant levee. The monarch whose palace was in Shushan would have none approach him unless he sent for them; but the King of kings has called for all his people, and they may come at all times. They were slain who went in unto the king Ahasuerus, unless he stretched out his sceptre to them; but our King never withdraws his sceptre, it is always stretched out, and whosoever desires to come to him may come now, and come at any time. Among the Persians there were some few of the nobility who had the peculiar and special right of an audience with the king at any time they chose. Now, that which was the peculiar right of a very few and of the very great is the privilege of every child of God. He may come in unto the King at all times. The dead of night is not too late for God; the breaking of the morning, when the first grey light is seen, is not too early for the Most High; at midday he is not too busy; and when the evening gathers he is not weary with his children's prayers. "Pray without ceasing," is, if I read it aright, a most sweet and precious permit to the believer to pour out his heart at all times before the Lord. I hear its still small voice saying, "Come to the mercy seat, O my child, whenever thou wilt; come to the treasury of grace whenever thou desirest—

> "The happy gates of gospel grace
> Stand open night and day."

The doors of the temple of divine love shall not be shut. Nothing can set a barrier between a praying soul and its God. The road of angels and of prayers is ever open. Let us but send out the dove of prayer and we may be certain that she will return unto us with an olive branch of peace in her mouth. Evermore the Lord hath regard unto the pleadings of his servants, and waiteth to be gracious unto them.

Still, however, it is *a precept*, "Pray without ceasing." And what does it mean? It means a great truth which I cannot very well convey to you in a few words, and, therefore, must try and bring out under four or five points.

It means, first, *never abandon prayer.* Never for any cause or reason cease to pray. Imagine not that you must pray until you are saved, and may then leave off. For those whose sins are pardoned prayer is quite as needful as for those mourning under a sense of sin. "Pray without ceasing," for in order that you may persevere in grace you must persevere in prayer. Should you become experienced in grace and enriched with much spiritual knowledge, you must not dream of

restraining prayer because of your gifts and graces. "Pray without ceasing," or else your flower will fade and your spiritual fruit will never ripen. Continue in prayer until the last moment of your life.

> "Long as they live must Christians pray,
> For only while they pray they live."

As we breathe without ceasing, so must we pray without ceasing. As there is no attainment in life, of health, or of strength, or of muscular vigour which can place a man beyond the necessity of breathing, so no condition of spiritual growth or advance in grace will allow a man to dispense with prayer.

> "Let us pray! our life is praying;
> Prayer with time alone may cease:
> Then in heaven, God's will obeying,
> Life is praise and perfect peace."

Never give up praying, not even though Satan should suggest to you that it is in vain for you to cry unto God. Pray in his teeth; "pray without ceasing." If for awhile the heavens are as brass and your prayer only echoes in thunder above your head, pray on; if month after month your prayer appears to have miscarried, and no reply has been vouchsafed to you, yet still continue to draw nigh unto the Lord. Do not abandon the mercy-seat for any reason whatever. If it be a good thing that you have been asking for, and you are sure it is according to the divine will, if the vision tarry wait for it, pray, weep, entreat, wrestle, agonise till you get that which you are praying for. If your heart be cold in prayer, do not restrain prayer until your heart warms, but pray your soul unto heat by the help of the ever-blessed Spirit who helpeth our infirmities. If the iron be hot then hammer it, and if it be cold hammer it till you heat it. Never cease prayer for any sort of reason or argument. If the philosopher should tell you that every event is fixed, and, therefore, prayer cannot possibly change anything, and, consequently, must be folly; still, if you cannot answer him and are somewhat puzzled, go on with your supplications notwithstanding all. No difficult problem concerning digestion would prevent your eating, for the result justifies the practice, and so no quibble should make us cease prayer, for the assured success of it commends it to us. You know what your God has told you, and if you cannot reply to every difficulty which man can suggest, resolve to be obedient to the divine will, and still "Pray without ceasing." Never, never, never renounce the habit of prayer, or your confidence in its power.

A second meaning is this. *Never suspend the regular offering of prayer.* You will, if you are a watchful Christian, have your times of daily devotion, fixed not by superstition, but for your convenience and remembrance; just as David, three times a day, and as another saint, seven times a day, sought the Lord: now be sure to keep up this daily prayer without intermission. This advice will not comprehend the whole range of the text, I am not pretending that it does; I am only mentioning it now as supplementary to other thoughts. "Pray without ceasing;" that is, never give up the morning prayer, nor the evening prayer,

nor the prayer at midday if such has grown to be your habit. If you change the hours and times, as you may, yet keep up the practice of regularly recurring retirement, meditation, and prayer. You may be said to continue in prayer if your habitual devotions be maintained. It would be quite correct for me to say that I know a man who has been always begging ever since I have been in London. I do not think that I ever passed the spot where he stands without seeing him there. He is a blind person, and stands near a church. As long as my recollection serves me he has been begging without ceasing; of course he has not begged when he has been asleep, he has not begged when he has gone home to his meals, nor did you understand me to have asserted anything so absurd when I said he had begged without ceasing for years. And so, if at those times when it is proper for you to separate yourself from your ordinary labours, you continue perseveringly begging at mercy's throne, it may be with comparative correctness said of you that you pray without ceasing. Though all hours are alike to me, I find it profitable to meet with God at set periods, for these seem to me to be like the winding up of the clock. The clock is to go all day, but there is a time for winding it up; and the little special season that we set apart and hedge round about for communion with our God, seems to wind us up for the rest of the day. Therefore, if you would pray without ceasing, continue in the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, and let it be perpetually an ordinance with you, that your times of prayer are not broken in upon.

That, however, is only a help, for I must add, thirdly, *between these times of devotion, labour to be much in ejaculatory prayer.* While your hands are busy with the world, let your hearts still talk with God; not in twenty sentences at a time, for such an interval might be inconsistent with your calling, but in broken sentences and interjections. It is always wrong to present one duty to God stained with the blood of another, and that we should do if we spoiled study or labour by running away to pray at all hours; but we may, without this, let short sentences go up to heaven, ay, and we may shoot upwards cries, and single words, such as an "Ah," an "Oh," an "O that;" or, without words we may pray in the upward glancing of the eye or the sigh of the heart. He who prays without ceasing uses many little darts and hand-grenades of godly desire, which he casts forth at every available interval. Sometimes he will blow the furnace of his desires to a great heat in regular prayer, and as a consequence at other times, the sparks will continue to rise up to heaven in the form of brief words, and looks, and desires.

Fourthly, if we would pray without ceasing, *we must be always in the spirit of prayer.* Our heart, renewed by the Holy Ghost, must be like the magnetised needle, which always has an inclination towards the pole. It does not always point to that pole, you can turn it aside if you will; in an iron ship it exhibits serious deflections, under all circumstances it is not exactly true; but if you put your finger to that needle and force it round to the east, you have only to take away the pressure, and immediately it returns to its beloved pole again. So let your heart be magnetised with prayer, so that if the finger of duty turns it away from the immediate act of prayer, there may still be the longing desire for prayer in your soul, and the moment you can do so, your heart

reverts to its beloved work. As perfume lies in flowers even when they do not shed their fragrance upon the gale, so let prayer lie in your hearts.

But, perhaps, the last meaning that I shall give has the most of the truth of the text in it, namely this: *Let all your actions be consistent with your prayers, and be in fact a continuation of your prayers.* If I am to pray without ceasing, it cannot mean that I am always to be in the act of direct devotion; for the human mind, as at present constituted, needs variety of occupation, and it could not without producing madness or imbecility continue always in the exercise of one function. We must, therefore, change the *modus* or the manner of operation if we are ceaselessly to continue in prayer. We must pursue our prayers, but do it in another manner. Take an instance. This morning I prayed to God to arouse his people to prayerfulness; very well; as I came to this house my soul continued to ejaculate, "O Lord, awaken thy children to prayerfulness." Now, while I am preaching to you and driving at the same point, am I not praying? Is not my sermon the continuation of my prayer, for I am desiring and aiming at the same thing? Is it not a continuing to pray when we use the best means towards the obtaining of that which we pray for? Do you not see my point? He who prays for his fellow creatures, and then seeks their good, is praying still. In this sense there is truth in that old distich.

> "He prayeth best that loveth best,
> Both man, and bird, and beast."

Loving is praying. If I seek in prayer the good of my fellow creature, and then go and try to promote it, I am practically praying for his good in my actions. If I seek, as I should do, God's glory above everything, then if all my actions are meant to tend to God's glory, I am continuing to pray, though I may not be praying with my thoughts or with my lips. Oh, that our whole life might be a prayer. It can be. There can be a praying without ceasing before the Lord, though there be many pausings in what the most of men would call prayer. Pray then without ceasing, my brother. Let thy whole life be praying. If thou changest the method, yet change not the pursuit; but continue still to worship, still to adore. This I think to be the meaning of our text,—never altogether abandon prayer; do not suspend the regular offering of prayer; be much in earnest ejaculations, be always in the spirit of prayer, and let the whole of your life be consistent with your prayer, and become a part of it.

III. How can we obey these words? First, let us labour as much as we can to prevent all *sinful* interruptions. "Pray without ceasing." Then if it be impossible to be in the act of prayer always, at least let us be as much as possible in that act; and let us prevent those interruptions which I mentioned in the early part of my discourse, the interruptions occasioned by our own sin. Let us endeavour to keep clear, as far as we can, of anything and everything in ourselves, or round about us, that would prevent our abounding in supplication. And let us also keep clear of interruptions from the sins of others. Do others forbid us to pray? Let us not be afraid of their wrath. Remember Daniel, who while he was under the penalty of being cast into a den of lions, yet opened his window towards Jerusalem, and prayed seven times a

day as he had done aforetime. Under no threats and for no bribes, let us ever cease to pray. In private let us always pray, and if duty calls us to do so where others observe us, let us so much fear the eye of God that we shall not dare to fear the eye of man.

Let us next avoid all *unnecessary* interruptions of every sort to our prayer. If we know that any matter, from which we can escape, has a tendency to disturb the spirit of prayer within us, let us avoid it earnestly. Let us try, as much as possible, not to be put off the scent in prayer. Satan's object will be to distract the mind, to throw it off the rails, to divert its aim, but let us resolve before God, we will not turn aside from following hard after him. Sir Thomas Abney had for many years practised family prayer regularly; he was elected Lord Mayor of London, and on the night of his election he must be present at a banquet, but when the time came for him to call his family together in prayer, having no wish either to be a Pharisee or to give up his practice, he excused himself to the guests in this way,—he said he had an important engagement with a very dear friend, and they must excuse him for a few minutes. It was most true, his dearest friend was the Lord Jesus, and family prayer was an important engagement; and so he withdrew for awhile to the family altar, and in that respect prayed without ceasing. We sometimes allow good things to interrupt our prayer, and thus make them evil. Mrs. Rowe observes in one of her letters, that if the twelve apostles were preaching in the town were she lived, and she could never hear them again, if it were her time for private devotion, she would not be bribed out of her closet by the hope of hearing them. I am not sure but what she might have taken another time for her private devotions, and so have enjoyed both privileges, but at the same time, supposing she must have lost the prayer and have only got the preaching in exchange, I agree with her, it would have been exchanging gold for silver. She would be more profited in praying than she would be in hearing, for praying is the end of preaching. Preaching is but the wheat-stalk, but praying is the golden grain itself, and he hath the best who gets it.

Sometimes we think we are too busy to pray. That also is a great mistake, for praying is a saving of time. You remember Luther's remark, "I have so much to do to-day that I shall never get through it with less than three hours' prayer." He had not been accustomed to take so much time for pray on ordinary days, but since that was a busy day, he must needs have more communion with his God. But, perhaps, our occupations begin early, and we therefore say, "How can I get alone with God in prayer?" It is said of Sir Henry Havelock that every morning when the march began at six, he always rose at four, that he might not miss his time for the reading of the Scripture and communion with his God. If we have no time we must make time, for if God has given us time for secondary duties, he must have given us time for primary ones, and to draw near to him is a primary duty, and we must let nothing set it on one side. There is no real need to sacrifice any duty, we have time enough for all if we are not idle; and, indeed, the one will help the other instead of clashing with it. When Edward Payson was a student at College, he found he had so much to do to attend his classes and prepare for examinations, that he could not

spend as much time as he should in private prayer; but, at last, waking up to the feeling that he was going back in divine things through his habits, he took due time for devotion, and he asserts in his diary that he did more in his studies in a single week after he had spent time with God in prayer, than he had accomplished in twelve months before. God can multiply our ability to make use of time. If we give the Lord his due, we shall have enough for all necessary purposes. In this matter seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Your other engagements will run smoothly if you do not forget your engagement with God.

We must, dear friends, in order to pray without ceasing, strive against *indolence* in prayer. I believe that no man loves prayer until the Holy Spirit has taught him the sweetness and value of it. If you have ever prayed without ceasing you will pray without ceasing. The men who do not love to pray must be strangers to its secret joy. When prayer is a mechanical act, and there is no soul in it, it is a slavery and a weariness; but when it is really living prayer, and when the man prays because he is a Christian and cannot help praying, when he prays along the street, prays in his business, prays in the house, prays in the field, when his whole soul is full of prayer, then he cannot have too much of it. He will not be backward in prayer who meets Jesus in it, but he who knows not the Well-beloved will count it a drudgery.

Let us avoid, above all things, *lethargy and indifference* in prayer. Oh, it is a dreadful thing that ever we should insult the majesty of heaven by words from which our heart has gone. I must, my spirit, I must school thee to this, that thou must have communion with God, and if in thy prayer thou dost not talk with God, thou shalt keep on praying till thou dost. Come not away from the mercy-seat till thou hast prayed.

Beloved brother, say unto thy soul, thus—"here have I come to the throne of grace to worship God and seek his blessing, and I am not going away till I have done this; I will not rise from my knees, because I have spent my customary minutes, but here will I pray till I find the blessing." Satan will often leave off tempting when he finds you thus resolute in prayer. Brethren, we need waking up. Routine grows upon us. We get into the mill-horse way—round, and round, and round the mill. From this may God save us. It is deadly. A man may pray twenty years with regularity, as far as the time goes, and the form goes, and never have prayed a single grain of prayer in the whole period. One real groan fetched from the heart is worth a million litanies, one living breath from a gracious soul is worth ten thousand collects. May we be kept awake by God's grace, praying without ceasing.

And we must take care, dear brethren, again, if we would perform this duty, that we fight against anything like *despair* of being heard. If we have not been heard after six times we must, as Elijah, go again seven times; if our Peter is in prison, and the church has prayed God to liberate him, and he still is in fetters bound in the inner prison, let us pray on, for one of these days Peter will knock at the gate. Be importunate, heaven's gate does not open to every runaway knock.

Knock, and knock, and knock again; and add to thy knocking asking, and to thy asking seeking, and be not satisfied till thou gettest a real answer.

Never cease from prayer through *presumption;* guard against that. Feel, O Christian, that you always need to pray. Say not, "I *am rich* and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." Thou art by nature still naked, and poor, and miserable; therefore, persevere in prayer, and buy of the Lord fine gold, and clean raiment, that thou mayst be rich, and fitly clothed.

Thus I have tried to set before you, beloved, how by resisting presumption and despair, indolence and lethargy, and trying to put aside all sinful and other interruptions, we may pray without ceasing.

IV. Now, very briefly, in the last place, WHY SHOULD WE OBEY THIS PRECEPT? Of course we should obey it because it is of divine authority; but, moreover, we should attend to it because *the Lord always deserves to be worshipped.* Prayer is a method of worship; continue, therefore, always to render to your Creator, your Preserver, your Redeemer, your Father, the homage of your prayers. With such a King let us not be slack in homage. Let us pay him the revenue of praise continually. Evermore may we magnify and bless his name. His enemies curse him; let us bless him without ceasing. Moreover, brethren, the spirit of love within us surely prompts us to draw near to God without ceasing. Christ is our husband. Is the bride true to her marriage vows if she cares not for her beloved's company? God is our Father. What sort of a child is that which does not desire to climb its father's knee and receive a smile from its father's face? If you and I can live day after day and week after week without anything like communion with God, how dwelleth the love of God in us? "Pray without ceasing," because the Lord never ceases to love you, never ceases to bless you, and never ceases to regard you as his child.

"Pray without ceasing," for you *want a blessing* on all the work you are doing. Is it common work? "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Is it business? It is vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for without God you cannot prosper. You are taught to say, "Give us this day our daily bread,"—an inspired prayer for secular things. Oh, consecrate your seculars by prayer. And, if you are engaged in God's service, what work is there in which you can hope for success without his blessing? To teach the young, to preach the gospel, to distribute tracts, to instruct the ignorant, do not all these want his blessing? What are they if that favour be denied? Pray, therefore, as long as you work.

You are always in *danger of being tempted;* there is no position in life in which you may not be assaulted by the enemy. "Pray without ceasing," therefore. A man who is going along a dark road where he knows that there are enemies, if he must be alone and has a sword with him, he carries it drawn in his hand, to let the robbers know that he he is ready for them. So Christian, pray without ceasing; carry your sword in your hand, wave that mighty weapon of all-prayer of which Bunyan speaks. Never sheathe it; it will cut through coats of mail. You need fear no foe if you can but pray. As you are tempted without ceasing, so pray without ceasing.

You need always to pray, for you *always want* something. In no condition are you so rich as not to need something from your God. It is not possible for you to say, "I have all things;" or, if you can, you have them only in Christ, and from Christ you must continue to seek them. As you are always in need, so beg always at mercy's gate. Moreover, blessings are always waiting for you. Angels are ready with favours that you know not of, and you have but to ask and have. Oh, could you see what might be had for the asking you would not be so slack. The priceless benisons of heaven which lie on one side as yet, oh, did you but perceive that they are only waiting for you to pray, you would not hesitate a moment. The man who knows that his farming is profitable, and that his land brings forth abundantly, will be glad to sow a broader stretch of land another year; and he who knows that God answers prayer, and is ready still to answer it, will open his mouth yet wider that God may fill it.

Continue to pray, brethren, for even if you should not want prayer yourself there are *others who do*—there are the dying, the sick, the poor, the ignorant, the backsliding, the blaspheming, the heathen at home, and the heathen abroad. "Pray without ceasing," for the enemy works incessantly, and as yet the kingdom has not come unto Zion. You shall never be able to say, "I left off praying, for I had nothing to pray for." This side heaven objects for prayer are as multitudinous as the stars of the sky.

And, now, I said I would say a word as to why WE ought to pray especially, and that shall close the sermon. Beloved friends, this church ought to pray without ceasing. We have been in years past notable for prayer. If ever a church has prayed it has been this church. I might find many faults with some who hinder prayer, but yet I must say in God's sight I know and feel that there has been living prayer in this church for many years, and hence it is we have had many years of peace and prosperity. We have lacked nothing because we have not lacked prayer. I do not doubt we might have had much more if we had prayed more; still prayer has been very mighty here. Now, brethren, suppose you had no pastor, suppose the preacher was gone from you, and that the black cloth upon this pulpit was not for a deceased elder of the church but for the preacher himself, you would pray, would you not? Will you not pray for me then while I live? If you would pray for another to come, will you not pray for me while I am here? I desire to discharge my office before you in God's sight with all earnestness, but I cannot without your prayers, and as being gone from you, you would lift up many sighs, and you would with prayers ask for a successor, pray for me while I am yet with you. Beloved, you have prayed very earnestly for the pastor when he has been sick, your prayers have been his consolation and his restoration; will you not pray for him now that he is able to preach the gospel, that his health may be sanctified to God's service, and the ministry of the truth may be mighty in the winning of souls. I ask it of you, I think I might claim it of you. I do beseech you, brethren, pray for us.

Suppose again, dear brethren, there were no conversions in our midst, would not you pray? And since there are a great many conversions, should that be a reason for leaving off? Shall we worship God the less

because he gives us more? Instead of one prayer which would go up were there no conversions, there should be ten now that he continues to work salvation among us.

Suppose we were divided, and had many schisms, and jealousies, and bickerings, would not the faithful ones pray in bitterness of spirit? Will you not pray since there are no divisions, and much Christian love? Surely, I say again, you will not treat God the worse because he treats you the better. That were foolish indeed.

Suppose we were surrounded to-day with hosts of persecutors, and that error everywhere crept into our midst and did us damage, would you not pray, you who love the Lord? And now that we live in days of peace, and error, though it prowls around, is kept out of our fold, will you not commune with the Lord all the more? I will say yet a third time, shall we pray the less because God gives the more? Oh, no, but the better he is to us the more let us adore and magnify his name.

Just now we need to pray, for some are growing cold, and turning to their old sins. We need to pray, for we are doing much for Christ. Every agency is in full work. We want a *great* blessing upon *great* efforts. We have had such results from prayer as might make a man's ears to tingle who should hear of them for the first time: our history as a church has not been second even to apostolic history itself: we have seen God's arm made bare in the eyes of all the people. and to the ends of the earth the testimony of this pulpit has gone forth, and thousands have found the Saviour,—all in answer to many prayers. Pray, then, without ceasing. O church in the Tabernacle, hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Oh, continue to be a praying church that we together, when we shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, pastor and people, may not be accused of being prayerless, nor of being slack in the work of the Lord. I earnestly hope all this will tend to make to-morrow's day of prayer more earnest and intense; but yet more do I pray that at all times all of us may be fervent, frequent, instant, and constant in prayer; praying in the Holy Ghost, in the name of Jesus.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—
1 Thessalonians iv. 13—18 and v.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHAT AND WHENCE ARE THESE?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 25TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—Revelation vii. 13, 14.

TOWARDS some subjects even the best of men need that their attention should be drawn. Certain themes need an introduction to our contemplations. We often see and yet do not see: we see that which upon the surface attracts the eye, but we fail to penetrate into the inner and more precious truth. Even in heaven, it would seem that the mind needs directing, and wants a friend to suggest inquiry; he who sees the white-robed host may yet need to be led to the consideration of who and what they are. It is very gracious on the part of our heavenly Father that he condescends to send us messengers of different kinds to awaken our attention, to guide our inquiry, and to lead us to search deeper than we might otherwise have done. John looked at the long ranks of triumphant spirits and admired their glory, but his thoughts had not penetrated deep enough, and therefore an elder was sent to speak with him. That personage asked him a question, and this he did that John might confess his ignorance, might feel a desire to know more, and might be led to inquire upon the point which it was most needful for him to consider. While we are dwellers here below our minds are very apt to be engrossed with the things which surround us, and we want some one to direct our thoughts to the upper world; and in the same way the mind of a person dwelling above would naturally be most occupied with the things around it in the glory land, and it might be needful to bid him remember facts concerning the lower world. We generally take that view of a matter which is most consistent with our own present circumstances, whereas to see a thing completely we need to view it from many angles. Hence the elder suggests to John that he should see these glorified spirits from another point than that which naturally suggested itself to him. He was led to

consider them, not as they then were, but as they had been. The question was therefore suggested to him, "Who are these, whence came they? What was their earthly character? What manner of men were they in the days of their pilgrimage? Were they cherubim, or children of men? Did they come hither on wings of fire, or came they hither as do the sons of Adam? Who are these that now have attained to such dignity and bliss, as to be now wearing the white robe of innocence, and waving the palm of victory?" To that enquiry I hope to lead your attention this morning; may it be as profitable to you as doubtless it was to John.

We are frequently tempted to think that our Lord Jesus was not in very truth a man like ourselves. His actual and proper humanity is believed among us, but not fully realised. We are apt to fancy that his was another flesh and another manhood from our own, whereas he was in all things made like unto his brethren, and was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. It is, therefore, needful again and again and again to set out the true brotherhood and kinship of Christ. The same spirit of error leads us into the feeling that those holy men who have attained to felicity must have been something different from ourselves. We set the apostles up in twelve niches, and look upon them as very superior beings. We can hardly imagine that they were partakers of our flesh and blood; and, as we see the whole white-robed host, we imagine in our hearts that they must have been far different from ourselves. They did well and valiantly we admit, and we rejoice that they have attained to a blessed reward; but we dream that we ourselves cannot do as well, nor win as great a recompense. Without exactly defining the feeling, we in some way persuade ourselves that something in their persons or in their circumstances entirely separated the glorified saints from us, and gave them an advantage over us, and therefore we despair of ever achieving their triumphs. Now, this error must be overcome, because it furnishes convenient excuses for indolence, and represses those holy ardours which are the life of elevated piety. Brethren, the point to which the elder drew John's attention is the one we are now driving at; he would have him note that those were glorified in heaven who were once tried and tempted as we are; they were, in fact, men of like passions with us. I grant you it would be very delightful for us to contemplate the present condition of joy and immortality possessed by yonder bright spirits, but for the moment it will be more practically useful for us to consider what they were and how they came to be what they now are, so that finding that they were of old what we now are, we may follow in their track, and may obtain to the same blessed rank as that which they now enjoy.

Our sermon on this occasion will consist of an answer to these two questions,—"*Whence come they?*" for though that was the second question asked, it was the first answered; and, secondly, "*Who are these?*" Our third point shall be, *What of all this?*

I. Concerning the bright spirits in heaven—WHENCE CAME THEY? These bearing the palms—whence came they? Reason itself suggests that they came from battle. It is not according to the wont of God to use emblems without a meaning. The palm, the ensign of triumph,

indicates most certainly a conflict and conquest. As on earth the palm would not be given if not won, we may conclude that the Lord would not have distributed the prize unless there had been a preceding warfare and victory. A conflict for a temporal crown is severe; how much more for an unfading palm in heaven. The winners of these palms must have passed through a battle of battles, an agony of agonies, a great tribulation. Palms which may be waved even before the throne of the august majesty of heaven are not easily come by. From the very fact that the glorified carry palms, we may infer that they did not come from beds of sloth, or gardens of pleasure, or palaces of peace, but that they endured hardness, and were men trained for war. The inference is well warranted, for it is even so; and the answer to the question, "Whence came they?" is this: "These are they which came out of great tribulation."

1. They were then like ourselves, for, in the first place, *they were tried like others.* They came out of great tribulation. Note, then, that *the saints now glorified were not screened from sorrow.* I saw to-day a number of lovely flowers; they were as delightful in this month of February as they would have been in the midst of summer; but I did not ask, "Whence came they?" I know very well that they were the products of the conservatory; they had not been raised amid the frosts of this chill season, else they had not bloomed as yet. But when I look upon God's flowers blooming in heaven, I understand from the voice of inspiration that they enjoyed no immunity from the chill breath of grief; they were made to bloom by the master hand of the Chief Husbandman, in all their glory, amid the afflictions, and adversities, and catastrophes which are common to men. God's elect are not pampered like spoiled children, neither are they like "the tender and delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness." They are, it is true, secured from all fatal injury, but they are not protected from the rough winds and rolling billows which toss every barque which bears a son of Adam. Turn over the roll of the worthies of the Lord from the first hero of faith to the last, and you shall not meet with a sorrowless name. Great are their privileges, but immunity from trouble is not among them. Was Adam God's elect? We hope he was, but certainly in the sweat of his face he ate his bread, and through his tears he saw the mangled body of his second son. Did God honour Abraham, and call him his friend? He was not without family afflictions, among the chief of which was the call to take his son, his only son, and offer him up for a sacrifice. Moses was king in Jeshurun, but his yoke, as a servant of the Lord, was a very heavy one; for all the day long was he vexed with the rebellions of a wayward people. Was David, the man after God's own heart? You know how deep called unto deep, while all God's waves and billows went over him. Speak ye of the prophets; which of them escaped without trial? Come ye to the apostles; which of these enjoyed a life of ease? Did they not all of them but one pass through the gates of death, wearing the martyr's crown? And he who died of old age, had not he been an exile in Patmos? Where, from their day down to this, among the elect of heaven do you find a single child of God unchastened, a solitary branch of the heavenly vine unpruned, or one ingot of precious gold untried

with fire? Through the flood, and through the fire, lies the pathway of the chosen. Through troops we must cut our way, and over walls we must leap, for to none is there a luxurious path to heaven. We must fight if we would reign.

True, God's people have been found in all ranks, but in every position they have had their sorrows. You find Esther, a queen beloved of God, but what were the tremblings of her heart when, with her life in her hand, she went in unto the king to plead against that wicked Haman? Lazarus was in the opposite stage of human circumstance, but he lay suffering at the gate of his ungenerous neighbour, and the dogs came and licked his sores In palace or in cottage the rod is the sure portion of all the heirs of salvation. Each state to the believer produces bitter herbs peculiar to itself, he shall never need to search far for the appointed accompaniments to the paschal lamb. I have heard that a great statesman once stopped his horse on a plain to speak with a shepherd who was resting in the midst of his flock. Thinking of his own heavy anxieties, he expressed his envy of the shepherd, because his life was so free from vexation. "Sir," said the shepherd, "I may not be troubled exactly as you are, but I have my own worries; do you see that black ewe there?" "Yes." "If she were dead," continued the shepherd, "I might be a perfectly happy man; but she is a plague to me, for every now and then she takes to going astray, and all the rest are sure to follow her." Rest assured, that there is a black ewe in every flock. Man is born to trouble. All the sons of God in heaven passed by "weeping-cross." Such burdens as we are now carrying on earth once pressed the shoulders of those now in glory. Our crosses are reproductions of the old yoke of Christ. Under our personal and relative griefs the glorified have smarted, and our sinkings of heart and fears of soul they have experienced. "Through much tribulation" they have inherited the kingdom.

Note, next, that they were *not even screened from temptation.* To the child of God, temptation to sin is a greater grievance than the suffering of pain. The saint has often said, "I could endure adversity, but it is misery to be day after day solicited to evil, to have the bait perpetually dangling before me, and to feel something in my soul which half consents to sin, and would altogether surrender were it not for watchful grace. Brethren, temptation to the pure mind is very grievous; to be sifted in Satan's sieve is a sore trial. Storms on any sea are to be dreaded; but a whirlwind raised by Satan on the black sea of corruption is horrible beyond conception. Yet, do not say you cannot enter heaven because you are tempted, for all those snow-white bands attained their glorious standing through much temptation, as well as through much affliction. They, like their Master, were tempted in all points as you are. Let me take you again to the old records, and ask you whether you find a single saint untempted? Oh, ye young men, who lament that you are so often allured to evil, have ye forgotten Joseph in Potiphar's house? Ye who dread the persecutor's frown, have ye forgotten Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? Ye of riper years, who feel your feet almost gone, do ye not remember David, and how he was tempted; ay, and worse, how he fell, and with broken bones had to limp his way to heaven? Which of the saints has been unassailed by

the fiery darts of the wicked one? Has not the fowler spread his nets to entangle every one of them? Has he not laid snares for every faithful soul? Review all the ranks of the white-robed squadrons, and enquire of every glorified spirit. Say to each one, "And thou? wert thou also tempted? Did the world seek alternately to fascinate and frighten *thee?* Hadst thou a body of sin and death to drag thee down? Hadst thou foes among thine own household? Didst thou also cry, "Woe is me, for I dwell in Meshech? To such questions each one of the perfected saints would reply that their perils were such as ours, and had it not been for Almighty grace, they would have utterly perished from the way. The shields of the mighty, which are now so highly exalted, were once battered by the blows of temptation, even as ours are at this hour.

We may add to all this, again, that *they were men who as keenly felt trial and temptation as we do.* Too frequently, when we are forced to admit that the trials of the saints were similar to our own, we persuade ourselves that their natures were less tender, their feelings less sensitive, their spirits less vulnerable than our own. We imagine that these ancient heroes wore some secret armour, or had their hearts steeled within, or wore a charmed life; and yet we know right well that all flesh of man has the same power to suffer, that a wound in another man's body bleeds even as it would in our own, and that reproach is as bitter to one spirit as to another. As face answereth to face in water, so the heart of man to man. Good men, because they are good, are not the less sorrowful when their beloved ones are taken from them: gracious men are not by grace petrified so as to despise the chastening of the Lord. Jacob mourned for Rachel, and David for Jonathan. You do not find the saints less troubled than other men when friendship turned to treachery, and love to hate. Tears flowed as readily from holy eyes as from the eyes of the ungodly. They were sons of men, born of women as we are, and subject to the same passions and emotions. Oh, no, they were not Stoics, nor men of iron, but, made of the same earth as ourselves, their hearts palpitated to the same tune. Daughter of grief, dost thou say, "I wish I were as the holy women of old, that in my trouble I might not be so cast down?" Read thou the history of Hannah, and mark how her adversary "vexed her sore to make her fret." She, too, was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. That story in the commencement of the First Book of Samuel I am sure must often have cheered the daughters of affliction when they have prayed in the bitterness of their souls, for they have said, here was a woman, tempted like as we are, and smarting as we do under unkind remarks and slanderous reports and ungenerous treatment, and yet she rejoiced in God's salvation. If your spirit is constitutionally sorrowful, and its wounds are often wantonly opened by those about you, read the story of Jeremiah, and his plaintive notes in the Lamentations will both help you to express your woes and furnish you with sympathy in them. Read, too, the sorrowful bemoanings of Job. That grand old patriarch of Uz is very stout, and plays the man right gloriously; he is no puling child, whining and wincing at a gentle touch of the rod; but patient as he is and a very king among men, yet how bitterly he curses the day of his birth, and how heavily he complains. Nor were

New Testament saints less tender, for Mary and Martha wept, Magdalene was bowed down with sorrow at her Lord's death, and the heart of the Virgin was pierced as with a sword. Peter wept bitterly, and Paul had continued heaviness. Tribulations abounded and afflictions were multiplied to the first disciples, and we wrong both themselves and us if we dream that it was easier for them to suffer than for us. I grant you that they possessed a secret something which enabled them to endure, but that something was not homeborn in their nature any more than it is in ours. They were fortified by a secret strength which they found at the throne of God in prayer, a patience which the Holy Ghost wrought in them, and which he is equally ready to work in us.

But, perhaps, it may be thought by some that those holy men who now wave the palm-branch were spared some of the keener and more refined tribulations; to which I reply, it certainly was not so. David especially appears to have compassed the whole round of affliction. He could say, "all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." From all quarters his trials arose; and from his youth to his death they assailed him. Let me remind you of that special grief which came upon him when his darling son excited rebellion against him, and his own chosen friend and counsellor, Ahithophel, betrayed him; and to this add the scene when that same darling son was slain in red-handed rebellion against his father, and David cried aloud, "O Absolom, my son, my son! would God I had died for thee! O Absolom, my son, my son!" I should not feel that I had ventured too far if I said that there is no trouble known to any person in this audience which would not find its parallel in the case of the afflicted writer of the Psalms. But, perhaps, you tell me that yours is a spiritual grief, and that such a wound is the deepest of all. Turn, then, to the life of the apostle Paul, and, as far as he unveils his experience, you shall find him to be the subject of internal strifes and spiritual contentions of the sharpest kind. Remember, especially, when with the thorn in his flesh he prayed thrice to God to have it taken away, but it was not removed; sufficient grace was given him, but he had to bear the inward smart; for, through much tribulation even of that kind must the chief of the apostles follow his Lord. What need of multiplying words? It is plain to every man that understandeth, that the children of God have been tried like others, and they who have won the victory fought a real battle, armed only as we may be, and assailed neither more nor less as we are, by the same enemies and the same weapons. As the church militant we claim indisputable kinship with the church triumphant. We are their companions in tribulation.

2. Next, we believe that *the saints who are now in heaven needed trial like others.* The word used in our translation is "tribulation," and you know that the word *tribulatio* is used by the Romans to signify a threshing instrument. When they beat out the corn from the straw, they called it *tribulatio;* and so tribulation is sent to us to separate our chaff from our wheat. Since the same tribulation happened to those who are now in heaven, we infer that they needed it as much as ourselves. To what end do men need tribulation? We reply, they often require it to arouse them; and yonder saints who serve God day and night in his temple, once slept as do others, and needed to be

bestirred. Were they not apostles who slept in Gethsemane? Yea, were they not three of the chief of the apostles who slumbered within a stone's cast of their Master in his agony? The best of men are prone to slumber, and need to be awakened by the buffetings of sorrow. They needed trial to chasten them. What son has God ever had, save his firstborn and well-beloved, that did not need chastening? Inasmuch as we are all sinners, we have need in our Father's house to suffer from the rod. They wanted tribulation as we do to loosen them from the earth, else they would have struck their roots into this poor soil, and tried to live as if this world were their portion. Affliction was also necessary to develope their graces; even as spices need bruising to bring forth their smell, and rose leaves require distilling to draw forth their sweetest perfume. They required adversity to educate them into complete manhood, for they too were once babes in grace. It is in the gymnasium of affliction that men are modelled and fashioned in the beauty of holiness, and all their spiritual powers are trained for harmonious action. It was meet also that they should suffer, in order to complete their service. Like their Lord, they had to be made perfect through suffering; and if they had not suffered they had not finished the work which he had given them to do. They needed tribulation, moreover, that they might be made like their Saviour; for a *saint* untroubled, how can he be like the man who wore the thorn crown? Never smitten, never slandered, never despised, never mocked at, never crucified, then how could we be like our Head? Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? They who are in heaven passed through tribulation, and they needed it as much as we do. Let us think of all this, for it may encourage us to press forward. They were knights of the same order as ourselves, and by the self-same methods obtained the honours which they wear.

3. Again, the children of God who are in heaven in their trials *had no other support than that which is still afforded to all the saints.* A miracle was here and there wrought I grant you; but then there are other things to be said on our side, for the Spirit of God was not given then as fully as we possess him now, and Christ had not then brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; so that what little advantage they had in miracle is far outweighed by the advantage we have in the gospel dispensation. What was it that upheld the saints of old who are now before the throne? Their faith was sustained by the promise of God, but we have the promise too. They rested on God's faithful word; that word is faithful still. We have more promises by far than most of them had received. They had but here and there a word of inspiration, we have the whole volume of consolation; yea, we have a double portion, for we have two books full of choice and gracious words. We have, therefore, more to cheer us than they had. They had the Spirit of God, you say; but, I reply, so have we. They had him *with* them, we have him *in* us. He visited them occasionally; he dwelleth in us; he never removeth from his people but abideth in them for ever. You will tell me that God worked with them: God works with us. Providence was on their side; and is not providence on our side also? All things worked together for their good; they work together for our good in the same manner. The Lord who was at the

helm of their vessel when storms assaulted it, still stands at the helm for us and holds the tiller with a strong hand. He who walked the waves of Gennesaret, and came to the rescue of the storm-tossed disciples, still saith to us, "It is I; be not afraid." I see no point in which they had superior resorts to those which are open to ourselves, for the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Their rest lay where our rest still lies; their peace and comfort were the same as our own. The Prince of Wurtenberg on one occasion in the midst of certain kings and great men heard them boasting, one of the mines which enriched his dominions, another of his forests, another of his vineyards. Now the Prince of Wurtenberg was poor, but he said, "I have a jewel in my country which I would not exchange for all your wealth," and, when they questioned him, he said, "If I were lost in any forest of my territory, or could not find my way along a lonesome road, if I said to the first peasant that I met that I was his king, I could lean my head upon him and lie down to sleep, and sleep securely there, feeling certain that he would watch over his king as he would over his child." So we feel, and so the saints of old felt a delightful security anywhere beneath the blue heavens of God. If we have not riches, if we have not honour, if we have nothing that flesh could desire, we can lie down anywhere and feel that we are perfectly safe in the divine keeping. The angels watch over us and protect us, for we are the children of God: all things work for our good; the beasts of the field are our friends, and stones of the field are in league for our defence. This was the portion of those who are now above; it is our portion still.

4. Very hurriedly I must notice, before I leave this first point, that *if there was any difference between those saints and ourselves, it lay in their enduring superior tribulations*, for "these are they that came out of *great* tribulation." If, I say, we must distinguish them from ourselves at all, it lies in this, that some of them were martyred as we are not, resisted unto blood as we have not, and were put to death by cruel torments as probably we shall not be. Theirs was the battle's brunt. For them the furnace was heated seven times hotter. My brethren, if their faith sustained them and won them the palm branch, why should not ours do the like for us? The text says, "These are they that came out of *the* great tribulation," for so it is in the original. It may mean some peculiarly severe tribulation which has befallen, or is about to befall the church; and, if so, it is consoling to observe that the saints shall come out of it unscathed: but I rather take it to mean the one long tribulation of God's saints in all ages. It is all one; it is all a part of the sufferings of the body of Christ; the saints in glory have had their share in the great tribulation, and, if anything, a greater share than we. We feel persuaded then, that as they were men like ourselves, who suffered as we suffer, and were supported as we are supported, we shall, through the same grace, win the same victory.

II. I will not detain you longer on that point, though there is much to be said, but I must take you to the second, and that is, WHAT ARE THESE? John beheld them all in white robes; and the question to be answered was, "Who are these,—these in heaven?" The reply was, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" from which we gather, first, that *all those in heaven were*

sinners, for they all needed to wash their robes. No superfluity would have been written down in this book; but had the robes been perfectly white, there had been no necessity to cleanse them, certainly not to cleanse them in Jesus' blood. They were sinners then, those glorious ones were sinners like ourselves. Look up at them now! Observe their ravishing beauty! See how faultless they are! And then, remember what they were. Oh, ye trembling sinners, whose bruised hearts dare not indulge a hope of the divine favour, those fair ones were once like you, and you are to-day what they were once. They were all shapen in iniquity as you were: they were everyone of them of woman born, and, therefore, conceived in sin. They were all placed in circumstances which allured them to sin; they had their temptations, as we have shown, and they lived in the midst of an ungodly generation, even as you do. What is more, they all sinned, for mere temptation would not have soiled their robes, but actual sin defiled them. There were thoughts of sin, there were words of sin, there were acts of sin in all of them. Did you observe that bright one who sang most sweetly of them all? Shall I tell you a part of his earthly history? He was one of the chief of sinners; he takes rank now amongst the chief of choristers, because he has most to sing about, since he had most forgiven and loved most. He will not tell you that he was naturally a saintly spirit, and that by mortification, and self-denial, and diligent perseverance he won his place in heaven. No, he will confess that his salvation was all of grace, for he was like others a sinner, and had transgressed above many. You will say, perhaps, that none of the saints had committed sins like yours, but there I must flatly contradict you. Amongst that illustrious company there are those who were once sinners of the deepest dye—the adulterer, the thief, the harlot, the murderer; some who were such are now glorified, for we have such characters mentioned in infallible Scripture as having been forgiven, sanctified, and at length glorified. Whatever your sin may be, and I will not mention it, for the mention of sin does not help to purify us from it; whatever it is, all manner of sin and blasphemy have been forgiven unto men, and the precious blood of Jesus has brought into eternal glory men stained with every form of sin. Jesus has cleansed crimson sinners, deep ingrained with iniquity; and scarlet sinners, whose crimes were of the most glaring hue. They all in heaven were sinners, such as we are.

Secondly, they *all who are in heaven needed an atonement*, and the same atonement as we rely upon. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Not one of them became white through his tears of repentance, not one through the shedding of the blood of bulls or of goats. They all wanted a vicarious sacrifice, and for none of them was any sacrifice effectual, except the death of Jesus Christ the Lord. They washed their robes nowhere but in the blood of the Lamb. O sinner, that blood of the Lamb is available now. The fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins, is not closed, nor is its efficacy diminished. Every child of Adam now in heaven came there through the blood of the great substitute. This was the key that opened heaven's door,—the blood, the blood of the Lamb. It was the one purification of them all, without one exception. If I were in thy case, O sinner, God helping me, I

would trust in the blood as they did, and enter heaven as they have done.

You will further notice that *the saints in heaven realised the atonement in the same way as we must do.* They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The act which gave them the virtue which lies in the atonement was the act of faith. They did not bring anything to the blood, any merit, or feeling, or preparation; they only brought their filthy garments to the blood, and nothing else. They washed and were clean. That was all. They did not give, they took; they did not impart, but they received. In this same way I have realised the merit of my Saviour's passion, and I know that every believer here will confess that this is his hope, he has washed and he is clean. There is nothing to do, and nothing to feel, and nothing to be, in order to forgiveness; we have but to wash and the filth is gone. Every child of God in heaven whether he were king or prophet, or seer, or priest, came there through simply relying and depending upon the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb, and that is all,—all. You must not dare to add to it, or you will sin against the all-sufficient sacrifice.

The text tells that the sole reason for the saints being in heaven at all was because they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb: "Therefore are they before the throne of God." But, is not one of them there because he had not sinned? There is no answer from all the shining hosts. Is not one of them glorified because a long life of consecration wiped out the small offences of his youth? No response comes to the enquiry. But, *if you ask* whether they were there because they have washed in the blood, the "Yes" which comes from them all is like the voice of many waters, and like great thunders.

III. Now, beloved, WHAT OF ALL THIS? Why, first of all, we must not draw the conclusion that trouble and temptation are any argument that a man will get to heaven. Perhaps I may be misunderstood this morning, and therefore I add a caution. There is a groundless notion abroad, that those who are badly off in this world will certainly have it made up to them in the world to come; and I have heard the parable of Lazarus and Dives quoted as though it taught that those who are poor here will be rich hereafter. There is not a shadow of reason for any such belief. You may go through much tribulation to hell as well as to heaven; and as a man may have two heavens, here and hereafter, by living near to God, so may a man have two hells, the hell which he bringeth upon himself in this life by his extravagances, his wickedness, and his lust, and the hell that shall be his punishment for ever in the world to come. Believe me, many a ragged, loathsome beggar has been damned; he was as poor as Lazarus, but not as gracious as he, and therefore no angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. There is no efficacy in the tongues of dogs to lick away sin, neither can a hungry belly atone for a guilty soul. Many a soul has begged for crumbs on earth, and has afterwards craved in vain for water in hell. You must take care not to suck poisonous error out of the flowers of truth.

I would, however, have you learn that no amount of trial which we have to suffer here, if we are believers in Jesus, should lead us to anything like despair, for however trouble may encompass us to-day, those in heaven came through as great a tribulation, and why may not we?

If messengers should come one after the other with swift feet to bring us heavy tidings, if all our property should melt, and our children should die, and even the partner of our bosom should tempt us to curse God, we must still hold fast our confidence. Our faith's motto should be, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." God may smite his children, but he never can cast off his children. He must love them, and he will love them for ever and for ever. Let us also understand that no amount of sin of which we may have been guilty ought to lead us to despair of pardon, salvation, and ultimate entrance into heaven, if we also wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb. Those who are in heaven have washed their robes white by faith in Jesus, and so may we. I may be addressing some one who has written his own death warrant. I thank God that the Lord has never written it. You may have said, "I know that I never shall have mercy." Who told thee that God had set a limit to his grace? Who has been up to heaven and found that thy name is not written among his chosen? Oh, do God the justice to believe that he delighteth in mercy, and that it is one of his greatest joys to pass by iniquity, transgression, and sin. And, suppose this day you should have in your own person trouble and sorrow united; suppose you should be going through the great tribulation, and at the same time you should have committed sin which has defiled your garment most conspicuously; though the gall and the wormwood be both in your cup and both be bitterest of the bitter, yet do not despair, for the saints whom John saw had the double blessing of deliverance and cleansing, and why should not you? I make bold to tell you that if your troubles were tenfold what they are, and your sins also were multiplied ten times, yet there is power in the eternal arm to bear you up under the tribulation, and there is efficacy in the precious blood to remove your sinful stains. By an act of faith cast yourselves upon God in Christ Jesus. If you do so, you shall take your place amongst the white-robed bands when this life ends.

I was led to these reflections this morning by the remembrance of the few short days ago since our beloved brother, Mr. Dransfield, whose mortal remains we committed to the tomb last Monday, was among us. You remember his accustomed seat, just here, at the prayer meeting; you remember how there was never an empty seat just over yonder at any of our public services. He was always among us, and he was just like ourselves. I am sure we all felt at home in his presence. He did not walk among us at all as a stilted personage or a supernatural being; he was a father among us; we loved him, esteemed him, revered him, but he was a man of men among us. I have tried to realise the same spirit before the throne of God, and I think I have been able to grasp the thought. I know he was like ourselves; I am equally certain that he is yonder, and that he is rejoicing in Christ; none of us doubt that. Now let us make a practical, common sense use of that fact and feel, I, too, resting where he rested—for, oh, how sweetly did he rest in his dying Lord—I, too, hoping as he hoped, shall bear up under troubles as he did during his painful illness, and I, too, shall have a joyful death as he did, for his soul triumphed in his God beyond measure. Why should not all of us, his brethren, enter where he is gone? Dear sister, why should not you? You who are consumptive,

you who know that death is drawing near to you, because you carry a disease about you which will take you home? Just realise the fact now before us. Our dear and well-known friend is really gone to the better land. You shook hands with that dear brother a few days ago, and now he is with God, and is waving the palm and wearing the white robe. It is not a dream, a fiction, or a fancy. It is not the delusion of high-blown fanaticism. It is not a wondrous attainment for some few special and renowned saints. Oh, no, it is for every one of us who believe in Jesus. They in heaven are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is not said, "These are they that were emperors," not "These are they who were reared in marble halls," not "These are they who were great scholars," not "These are they who were mighty preachers," not "These are they who were great apostles," not "These are they who lived spotless lives;" no, but these are they who came through the tribulation of life, and were cleansed from their sins, as others must be, in the precious blood of Jesus; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.

Dear brother Dransfield, thou wast bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and yet thou art perfected before the throne. We thy brethren are on the way and shall be with thee soon. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation xiv.

As a very large number of friends from a distance desire occasionally to attend the Tabernacle, but do not like to encounter the crowds at the doors, the deacons have resolved to issue early admission tickets, which will admit the holder before the general public, during the month of issue. They will be purchasable at the price of one shilling, and can be had by letter, enclosing twelve penny stamps, and one half-penny stamp for postage, of Mr. C. Blackshaw, Tabernacle, Newington Butts.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MERCY'S MASTER MOTIVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 17TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another."—Isaiah xlviii. 9—11.

THE people of Israel in all their generations were full of evil. Those who came out of Egypt were a rebellious people, and for forty years multiplied their provocations of the Lord in the wilderness, till at last they all found a grave in the desert. The generation following were stiff-necked and rebellious like their fathers, and they continually went astray after false gods. Though by the good hand of the Lord they were settled in a goodly land which flowed with milk and honey, yet they forgot the covenant and sinned grievously. Though they were smitten and bruised for their idolatries, yet their successors did the same: whether they were ruled by the high priest, or governed by the judges, or presided over by a king, it little mattered, they started aside still, they were never to be depended upon. Idolatry and rebellion against God were ingrained in their nature; this sin was in their bone, and it would come out in their flesh. At last the Lord, whose glory tabernacled in Zion, appeared to grow weary of keeping house with such ungracious children and unfaithful servants, and he broke up the house altogether: he gave up his temple to be destroyed, the whole land to be ravaged, and the inhabitants to be carried away captive into Babylon. The Lord was wroth with his heritage, and therefore he gave his holy and beautiful house to the fire, and the carved work thereof to be broken down with hammers, while the whole Jewish state was utterly shattered, and of the kingdom not one stone was left upon another that was not cast down. Yet such is the immutability of God in his affection, that he had not long sent his people into captivity before his bowels yearned towards them again. He cast his eye over to Babylon, and saw his chosen sitting in sadness by the far-off rivers, hanging their silent harps upon the willows, and weeping at the remembrance of Zion; and he

said unto himself, "I have chosen this people of old, and I have loved their fathers, and I have made them to be a people unto me above all the people that are upon the face of the earth, therefore again I will have mercy upon them." Then the Lord looked to find a reason for mercy in their past conduct, but could see none. He looked at their present character for a plea, and found none, for even while they were under the rod they exhibited hardness of heart, so that even the eyes of mercy could see no reason for favour in them. What should the Lord do? He would not act without a reason: there must be something to justify his mercy, and show the wisdom of his way. Since there is none in the offender, where shall mercy find her plea? Behold the inventiveness of eternal love! The Lord falls back upon himself, and within himself finds a reason for his grace. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." Finding a motive in his own glory which was bound up in the existence of Israel, and would have been compromised by their destruction, he turned unto them in love and kindness; Cyrus wrote the decree of emancipation, the Israelites came back to the land, and once again they sat every man under his own vine and fig tree, and ate the good of the land. So far we give the historical meaning of the passage.

We shall now use the text as an illustration of divine love in other cases, for from one deed of grace we may learn all. As God dealt with his people Israel after the flesh, in the same manner he dealeth with his people Israel after the spirit; and his mercies towards his saints are to be seen as in a mirror in his wondrous lovingkindness towards the seed of Abraham.

I shall take the text to illustrate—first, *the conversion of the sinner;* and secondly, *the reclaiming of the backslider;* and I pray, dear friends, most earnestly, that while I speak God may move with his Spirit upon your hearts, so that many of you may follow me, sincerely feeling that which I describe. While I am speaking may your souls be silently saying, "Yes, we know what that means, we have felt it; we gladly yield assent thereto, for we know it to be even so."

I. First, then, in reference to THE CONVERSION OF THE SINNER.

Let us suppose a case. It is God's will to save yonder sinner; he has ordained him to eternal life, and predestinated him to be conformed to the image of his dear Son. In due time the Lord begins to deal with the man in a way of grace, and where does he find him? This shall be our first point this morning. He finds him so utterly ruined and depraved, that *in him there is no argument for mercy, no plea for grace.* I will suppose that such a soul is here this morning, awakened into a perception of his true condition, and craving for pardon. Soul, canst thou upon calm reflection find in thyself some good thing which may be pleaded in extenuation of guilt, or as a reason for forgiveness? What has been thy past conduct? Are there redeeming features in it? Alas, no! You must at once confess that your neck has been an iron sinew and your brow brass. You have been *obstinate* in sin; against many warnings, entreaties, and chastisements, you have persisted

in it. Neither law nor gospel, providence nor conscience, has sufficed to turn you from your perverse ways. Your neck would not bend before either the terrors or the mercies of God. You have heard sermons which seemed enough to melt the heart of a stone, but you have been unmoved. You have seen others bowing themselves before the Lord Jesus Christ with holy joy, and yet you have done no such thing, but have been exceeding stout against the Lord of Hosts. Looking back upon the past also, you have to confess great *impudence* in your dealing with God; your brow has been brass. You have gone direct from his house to sin. He claims but one day in a week to himself, but you have robbed him of that. It may be you have used his name in common jests, if not worse; you have dared to employ it profanely; you have scoffed at his people; you have derided everything that has been good, and in looking back you are obliged to confess that there are ten thousand reasons why God should not refrain from his anger, and overwhelming reasons why he should cut you off; but you cannot find so much as one single argument why he should be pleased to spare and save you. Every man who is really brought to Christ is first stripped of all on which he placed reliance as a ground of hope, and made to see that in himself there is guilt deserving condemnation, and rebellion demanding punishment, but there is no quality which can enlist divine sympathy or secure, by its own excellence, divine regard. In us, by nature, there are no beauties of character, no charms of virtue, or loveliness of conduct to win the Almighty heart. We were called "transgressors from the womb," and rightly were we named.

O awakened soul, where art thou this morning? I wish I could speak with thee face to face, and hear thee say, "How can I expect divine goodness to spare such a one as I am, for, in addition to all other sins, I have behaved very *treacherously* towards the Lord my God. Not long ago I was laid upon a sick bed, and then I repented, or thought I did, and I sought God very vehemently, and I vowed unto the Lord, that if I was raised up again, I would not rest till I had sought his face. But I left my couch and my repentance died on my sick bed. No sooner had I recovered than I returned to my sin, as a dog to his vomit, and as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. After this, how can I have the face to go to God again? I lied unto him, I flattered him with my tongue, and my heart was not sound in his ways. My goodness was gone as the dew from the grass, or the meteor from the sky." Yes, poor soul, this confession is true, and it proves, beyond all question, that no reason for mercy can be drawn from your past conduct when you have been under the rod. Why should you be stricken any more? you will revolt more and more." Chastisement is lost upon you; your nature is hopeless; do what he may with you, you will not turn unto the Lord.

Ah, and I think I hear you say, "neither can I promise to God anything as to the future. I dare not say to him to-day, "Have mercy upon me, and then I will be very different from what I have been. No, my heart is too treacherous for me to trust it. I might sooner promise what the sea will be to-morrow, than pledge my future character. Changeful as the winds that blow from every quarter of the sky is my nature; fickle and false am I. I seem to-day resolved for good,

to-morrow I may be resolved for evil, and what I vowed to do most vehemently will never become fact. I dare not say that in the future I can see any reason why God should have mercy upon me." Oh, how how glad my heart is when I can meet with a person who confesses this to be his case. It is a very sad difficulty to be in, a very painful one, when the soul at last abandons all arguments, extenuations, and apologies, and says, "Lord, I am guilty, I stand at thy judgment-seat and I can say nothing but guilty. Thou art clear when thou judgest, thou art just when thou condemnest, and if thou shouldst put on the black cap, and say, 'Prisoner at the bar, hast thou anything to say why sentence should not be speedily executed upon thee?' I could not even stammer out an apology, but must stand speechless before my judge."

"My lips, with shame, my sins confess
Against thy law, against thy grace:
Lord, should thy judgment grow severe,
I am condemn'd, but thou art clear.

Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death;
And, if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

In the text I beg you specially to remark our second thought, namely, that *God himself finds the reason for his mercy*, and, O ye heavens hear it, and be astonished O earth, he finds it in himself. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off." Here is the drift of the thought—the Lord is a patient God, and determines to make his *patience* glorious. When all was darkness the Lord said, "Let there be light!" and light was;—thus he glorified his power. When all was chaos Jehovah brought fair order out of grim confusion, and so glorified his wisdom. So in the sinner's case the Lord sees a wretch who has provoked him to his face for thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, perhaps seventy or eighty years, and as the Lord desires an opportunity to glorify his patience, he finds it ready to his hand. Having permitted that sinner to live when he scoffed at the gospel, scorned the atonement, and rejected the Redeemer, the Lord at length crowns his longsuffering by blotting out his sins, and forgiving all his misdeeds, whereat all creatures stand amazed, and men, and angels, and devils in astonishment cry out, "Who is a God like unto thee, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" Who but the God of boundless grace could have borne with such a provoking sinner, and then after all have taken him into his own bosom as his child.

God also would illustrate in the salvation of a sinner not only his patience, but his sovereign and abundant *mercy* towards sinners. If the Lord were to select this morning as the object of his grace some soul possessing merit, if such were the case, if he were to choose some soul in whom there was a claim for pity (of course I am supposing an impossibility), then there would be little glory to his grace; but when, casting his divine eyes of compassion all round this assembly, he selects a soul that is bad throughout, black without and black within, a soul that has laid soaking in sin like the wool in the scarlet dye, till the

colour is ingrain, then he magnifies the glory of his grace. When he looks upon a wretch who confesses either by his silence or by his tearful speech, that he deserves his wrath, and says, "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee: I have laid them on the Saviour's head, go and sin no more, thy transgressions are blotted out, I have purchased thee unto myself by the death of my Son," oh, then, how the sinner's heart melts with gratitude, love, and wonder in the presence of such a God. The Lord is loved much in that heart which feels that much has been forgiven; thus God's glory begins to be known, and soon it spreads abroad. The neighbours and friends and kinsfolk of the pardoned penitent say unto one another, "Was it ever done after this sort before? Have you ever heard the like of this? Here is this man saved—this man who lay at hell's dark door, and seemed only fit to be cast into the pit!" Oh, how the shouts go up to high heaven from the watchful angels who joy over penitents, "Glory be unto almighty grace."

Now, look thee, man, once more, God can, by saving such a one as thou art, not only glorify his patience and grace but display his *power*. It is evident that it is not an easy task to conquer thee. Thou hast been like Leviathan whose heart is hard as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. "The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon; the arrow cannot make him flee; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear." Thou hast laughed at all men who would convince thee, and even the thunders of God's providence have not sufficed to alarm thee; yet now the Lord intends to show what his Almighty grace can do. Now will he by a miracle of gracious power turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove. The conversion of little sinners, if such there be, would but little honour him; but if they be desperately set on mischief there is room for the eternal and ever blessed God to display the glory of his name. For his name's sake will he do it; even for his own sake will he do it, that men may see what his patience, grace, and power can accomplish. Truly the Lord's love does accomplish great moral wonders. Forgiveness even among men is often more potent than punishment. I have heard it related of a soldier at Woolwich, that he had frequently been drunk and disorderly; and, though he had been very frequently imprisoned, and otherwise punished for his offences, he was incorrigible. On one occasion he had incurred the severe penalty of the lash, and expected to receive it. He had no excuse to offer, and did not pretend to make any. He was sullen and obdurate. At last the commanding officer said to him, "We cannot do anything with you; we have imprisoned you; we have flogged you; yet we cannot improve you. There is only one thing we have never done with you, and that we are going to try; we forgive you." The culprit broke down at once. Hard as he was, this new treatment overcame him. That word, "You are fully forgiven," broke him down far more than the nine-thonged cat; he was never an offender again. Many a soul that has been very obstinate against God, even to persecuting the followers of the Lord Jesus, when the Lord has by the Holy Spirit said in his heart, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, I gave my Son to die for thee; I laid thy sins on him, and now I freely forgive thee, and take thee to be my

child, my well-beloved." Oh, then, how speedily the heart dissolves, and the rebellious will surrenders.

"I yield—by mighty love subdued,
Who can resist its charms?
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,
Into my Saviour's arms."

God grant that in many and many a case this may be true at this moment.

But, now, it may be that a soul here present is saying, "Well, I can see that God can thus find a motive for mercy in himself, when there is none in the sinner, but why is it that the Lord is chastening me as he is?" Possibly you are sickly in body, have been brought low in estate, and are grievously depressed in mind. God now, in our text, goes on to *explain his dealings with you*, that you may not have one hard thought of him. It is true he has been smiting you, but it has been with a purpose and in measure. "I have refined thee, but not with silver." You have been put into the furnace of affliction, but not,—note the "but,"—"*but* not with silver." Now, when silver is refined it requires the most vehement heat of all metals. God has not brought upon you the severest troubles. You have been chastised, but not as you might have been, nor as you deserved to have been. You have been made to suffer, but his strokes have been fewer than your crimes and lighter than your guilt. You are now bowed down and depressed, but you are not quite without some rays of hope, specially now that you have heard the glad sound of a free-grace gospel. You have been "refined," that was God's object; but the process has been slight, it is "not with silver." The Lord has not dealt with you as men do with silver. What do they do with it? They put it into a fire that the dross may be consumed, and the silver may be made pure. Now, if you, poor sinner, had been put into such a fire as that, you would have been utterly destroyed, for in you there was no silver at all. As you are by nature you are not at all like silver, and the heat of a silver furnace would quite consume you. True it is that now his grace has created a vein of silver in your heart, but he does not yet intend to put you to extreme tests, for your weak graces would fail in the process. What he has sent to you has been with a view to awaken and to quicken, to take away your self-confidence and false peace, and so in a measure to refine you; but he does not depend for the refinement of either you or his people upon the furnace of affliction, he has other and more effectual modes of purification. The furnace of trouble is often used as a mode of refining, but after all it is only a means; the real refining fire is the Holy Ghost, the true purification lies in the blood of him who sits as a refiner. Remember it is not said that trouble will purify the sons of Levi; but "HE is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's sope;" and "*he*," not with trouble but by himself, "shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." Mere suffering would only make a man more drossy; apart from divine grace affliction has no good effect. If we are not sanctified by the Eternal Spirit when in the furnace of affliction, and if the precious blood of Jesus be not applied to our soul, all the distress and grief in the world will not purify us. And

so, poor soul, God has wrought you good in your trouble, but he does not mean to continue to vex you until your soul is perfectly refined, for that would be more than you could bear, even could it be possible. No, no, he will put away your sin by better means. Behold the precious blood! You have not to suffer for your sins, for Christ has suffered for them in thy stead. You are to be refined, but not by processes of a fiery character. Behold the sacred water from the riven side of your Redeemer, for that will take your filthiness away. Behold the Eternal Spirit waiting to renew your soul—that will effectually remove your dross. The Spirit has refined you, in a measure, by what you have suffered, by awakening and convincing you; but the true refining shall come to you in another way, therefore be of good courage, thank God for what you have felt, but be not bowed down with abject terror as though your trials would quite consume you. They shall be both mitigated in degree, and useful in result.

And now, notice the next thing: the Lord declares that *the time of trial is the chosen season for revealing his love to you:* "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." This verse does not teach that God's choice of any man begins in time, or begins when he is under affliction. Oh, no, the choice of God is without beginning, it is eternal. God seeth the things that shall be as though they were; everything is *now* with him. But it often happens that the time in which God reveals his choice and manifests his electing love to a soul is when that soul is almost consumed with trouble. And now, dear hearer, I must again picture thee, for my object is not to preach to the winds, but to preach right into thy soul; thou hast been brought very low of late; thou hast been like a field ploughed, harrowed, cross-ploughed, scarified; there is no rest to thee; and thou canst plead no reason why God should give thee rest. Thou art brought into abject distress of spirit. Now is the time when the Lord reveals his love to such as thou art. I never knew his love when I strutted abroad in the bravery of my self-righteousness, and I never should have known it. I never heard him say "I have chosen thee," when I fared sumptuously every day at the table of my own self-sufficiency. I never heard him say, "My son that was dead is alive again, he that was lost is found," when I had still the gold in my purse and was spending my living riotously. But, I will tell you when I heard him say, "I have chosen thee": it was when I came fresh from the swine-trough, with my belly aching because I could not fill it with husks, with my filthy rags about me, and my soul all sinking in despair; with no argument upon my lip except this: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Then for the first time I heard him say, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." It is when we are down to the very lowest, when we are brought to bankruptcy and beggary spiritually, when we lie at Christ's feet as though we were dead, it is then he puts his hand upon us, and says, "Fear not, I am the first and the last": it is then he anoints us with the oil of joy, it is then he clothes us with the garments of salvation, it is then we hear the voice of eternal love, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

But note, once more, before I leave the sinner's case, that lest the

soul should forget it, *the Lord repeats again the point he began with*, and unveils the motives of his grace once more. What is the eleventh verse but the echo of the ninth: "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." God cannot save you, sinner, for your own sake, you are not worth the saving. If you are cast away upon the dunghill of oblivion for ever, it is as much as you deserve; you are not worthy of God's notice, you are a mere speck in his great universe, and having dared to sin against him, it is as fit that he should destroy you, as it is fit that a venomous reptile should be crushed beneath your foot. Yet the Lord declares that he will refrain from wrath. He will have mercy upon you, oh, broken heart, for his own sake; do you observe why it is "for his own sake," namely, that his name "may not be polluted." Now, suppose a sinner shall come to him and cry, "Lord, I am a guilty soul, I have no merit to plead, but I appeal to thy mercy, I trust in thy love. Thou hast said that through Christ Jesus, thou wilt forgive sinners. Lord, I trust in thy dear Son. Save me for his sake. Now if he does not save you, we speak with reverence and bated breath, but we use his own words, his name will be "polluted," because then it will be said, "Here is a soul that came to the Lord, and he cast it out, and yet he said, 'him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Here is a poor sinner that rested on the love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus and yet was confounded, whereas, he promised that they that trust in the Lord should never be confounded, nor ashamed, world without end." I know this morning that my hope is fixed on Christ Jesus alone. If I am ever lost I shall be a soul in hell resting upon Christ, and do you think that can ever be? Will they not publish it in the streets of Tophet; here is a soul that dared believe in Jesus, but Jesus repelled him as presumptuous. Here is a poor soul who cried

> "If I perish, I will pray,
> And perish only there;"

and yet this soul is damned." Why, surely such an one would be carried in triumph through the blazing streets of hell, and held up as an insult to the God of mercy, as a proof that he had not kept his word. O soul, he will save you, for his own sake, lest his name should be "polluted," for he is jealous of his name. He will never permit it to be truthfully said, even by a devil, that he ever broke a promise, even to a devil. If you will go to him in Christ Jesus, though you be all but damned already, and feel that your death warrant is signed; he will not, he cannot, reject you. Throw yourself at the cross-foot, and say, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief;" and God will never tarnish his name by thy destruction.

And then, he adds, "And I will not give my glory unto another." But if a soul should perish while trusting in the blood of Christ, the glory of God would go over to Satan. It would be proved that Satan had overcome the truthfulness of God, or the power of God, or the mercy of God; that at last evil had proved more mighty than good, and sin had abounded over grace. Can it ever be that goodness shall find a difficulty which it cannot overcome, a Red Sea it cannot divide, or a Lebanon which it cannot climb? No, never, while God is God. Oh,

that I had before me the biggest sinner that ever lived! I would like to look this morning into the face of a criminal who has piled up mountains on mountains of sins, defied his God, and derided the laws of his country; a ruffian red-handed with murder, and dripping with lust; for I would glory in saying to him, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Come but to God's arms through Jesus Christ his Son, and *you* shall find him a God ready to forgive, and abounding in lovingkindness. He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."

I do not know how to preach the gospel more fully than I am now doing. I am labouring to set before downcast sinners an open door, and to show them how effectually grace has removed every hinderance out of the way, by basing its arguments of love upon the name of God, and not upon the merit of the creature.

II. Thus much to the sinner; we shall now speak OF THE RECLAIMING OF THE BACKSLIDER.

Backsliding professor, your case is more evidently meant in the text even than that of the sinner, for God was speaking to his own people Israel in these remarkable words. Now your crime, if any thing, is a more censurable one than that of the sinner. I can see no more reason why God should have mercy upon you than upon the ungodly, indeed, I see more reason for punishing you, for you have made a profession and belied it. "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, which swear by the name of Jehovah, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness." That is your character, you have taken Christ's name upon you, I cannot say altogether that you have been deceived and a deceiver, but your actions look as if you have been, for you have gone aside from the faith, and turned aside from your Lord. You did know something of his love; and, unless awfully deceived, you once rested on the Lord Jesus. Shall I publish abroad your guilt? How hath the much fine gold become dim! How hath the blazing sun of your profession been altogether eclipsed? You have transgressed in opposition to light and knowledge; you knew more than the sinner, and yet you have sinned as he did; you knew something of the sweets of Christ's table, but you have joined yourself to the table of devils. And you have been very perverse about it too, for providence has dealt sharply with you, but you would not come back to your God. Your neck has been an iron sinew, and your brow has been brass! Alas, how treacherously have you dealt with the Lord your God! No sin is so destructive to married love as that of adultery, yet the Lord puts the backslider's case on the same footing, in the third chapter of the book of Jeremiah. "They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Cavil not at the imagery for its coarseness, but rejoice in its matchless grace. Read on in that same chapter, from the twelfth verse to the end, and note the verse, "Turn unto me, O backsliding children; for I am married unto you, saith the Lord." But why should the Lord bid his chosen nation come

back? Not because she deserved to be received again, not because in heaven, or earth, or hell, there could be found any reason why she should for her own sake be restored. Her sins said, "Put her away, put her away; shall the holy God have anything to do with such an one as this?" Justice said, "Put her away, the law demands it." Holiness said, "Put her away, how shall she come into God's house?" But, his infinite love replied, "The Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away," He will not hear of a divorce; and again he cries, "Return, ye backsliding children, I am married unto you, saith the Lord." Backslider, you see there is no reason for God's grace that can be found in your person or in your character, but it is found in the divine heart. I must go over the same ground again. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off."

The Lord has a reason for not cutting off backsliders, and it is this—first, his many promises must be kept in which he has declared that his chosen shall not perish, neither shall they utterly depart from him. Is not this the very tenor of the covenant? "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." His gifts and calling are without repentance, irrevocable. It shall not be said that his promise was ever revoked or broken; he has made a covenant with our Lord Jesus, and that covenant is sealed with blood; know ye not the sum and substance of it? "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Thus the faithfulness of God to his promises would be questioned if any of his people finally apostatised.

God's grace is also interested in it; for if after all your provocations God were to say, "I have given thee up, I will never deal with thee in grace again," then it would be said that God's grace had a limit, that it could not abound over sin, and after all was a mutable thing. Can it be that forgiving grace should punish the forgiven? That adopting grace could unchild the child? That wrath should dismember the body of Christ, and mangle the Redeemer, to be avenged upon the backslider? Oh, no, such is Jehovah's truth, that he will keep every promise to the letter; such is his grace, that his people shall never sin to such an extent but what his grace will overtop it all; and such is his immutability, that though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself. Hath he said, and will he not do it; hath he commanded, and shall it not come to pass? Come back, backslider, God has not changed towards you; return at once to him. His heart is still full of love to you. Return unto him, for still doth he say, "How can I set thee as Admah, how can I make thee as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled; I will not destroy him, for I am God and not man." There is a free course for mercy to those who have wandered furthest, when God finds a motive for grace in his own name and in his own praise. Why, do you not see, poor trembling backslider, that if God forgives you, and you once get to heaven, you

will be among the heartiest of heaven's choristers? I mean to sing the loudest of any if I ever enter the celestial seats, for I shall owe so much to the sweet love and grace of God; but David and other great backsliders will also love most intensely. It is amazing grace which not only saves at first, but restores the wandering sheep after it has gone astray. Oh, you Christians who are kept by divine grace walking with God, you have much to praise him for, you ought to bless him every day you live; but you who have fallen and gone aside, if the Lord brings you back you must henceforth render double diligence and sevenfold love. Henceforth you must be like the woman who broke the alabaster box over Christ's head, you must feel that you cannot do enough for that dear Lord and Saviour who saw you in all your rebellions, and yet loved you. Loving you because he would love you; not because you were lovely, but because he would love you; not because you were deserving, but because he would love you. This ought to make you the very choicest of Christians, this should place you in the front of the champions of the Lord in the day of battle.

Please to observe, that God having thus declared the reason of his love to the backslider goes on to tell him, that the present sufferings which he is now enduring as the result of his backslidings should be mitigated. "I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have put thee into the fire, but I have not blown the heat to such an extreme degree that thy sin should be melted from thee: that would be a greater heat than any soul could bear. I have refined thee, that was needful, but not as silver; that would have been destructive to thee." Thou sayest, "All thy waves and billows have gone over me." Not so; you know not what all God's waves and billows might be, for there is a depth infinitely lower than any you have ever seen. The deeps of hell are far more horrible than anything you can imagine. If you are in the furnace to-day do not repine, do not say like Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," but rather say, "I will kiss the rod, and bless my Father's name that he allows me to live at all, and now bids me to return to him. I will thank him for the rod; it is the token of the Father's love to his child."

Then comes his next word: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction;" that is, as if he said, "I will renew my election of you." It was never revoked, but now it shall be more manifestly declared. God has looked at you in prosperity and he has seen you treacherously forgetting him. You prospered in business and you grew very worldly, God could see no beauty in your face. You had your children about you, and your wife made you glad, and you lived almost without prayer, without reading the scriptures; God therefore hid his face from you. Now, however, your affairs are at a low ebb and you begin again to pray; the neglected Bible is brought down again; now the seat that could be left unoccupied half the Sabbath-day is always filled by you; now you begin saying, "My God, my God, have mercy on me." Hear this for your comfort,—the Lord never thinks his children's faces more lovely than when they are slobbered with tears; when repentance defiles the face before men it beautifies it before God; when the eyes grow red with sorrow they are lovely unto the Lord. Do you beat upon your breast, and say, "God be merciful to me a

sinner," then know, that no sound of tabor is so sweet to God as the sound of beaten breasts, no music hath more melody in it than the sigh of a broken heart.

Brethren, all of you, though you are not open backsliders, perhaps you may be worse than those who are. I know in my own soul, I never feel safe except when I stand as a sinner at the cross foot; and though I desire to grow in grace, and to be a saint, and would use language suitable to a child of God, and would not keep my hands off a single covenant privilege that belongs to me as one with Christ; yet, for all that, while I am in this flesh, I feel my happiest moments are those lowly times when I feel that I am nothing, and that Jesus is my all in all. God chooses his people over again when he sees them contrite in the furnace of soul affliction. When he sees them low he loves them; when he sees them down he lifts them up; when he sees them withered in themselves then he makes them flourish; when they are nothing his love is everything. When they are swollen with pride and self-reliant, he turns his face away from them; but to his dear broken-hearted children, he is all kindness; and this is his reason, "How shall my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." If one poor believer who is pining after Jesus' face were forgotten by him, his name would be polluted—where would be his immutability? And then again, Satan would glory over that child of God and say, "I have dragged a child of God down to hell!" Christ's blood would suffer dishonour, for it would be said that a soul was punished though Christ was punished in its stead, and that were to obliterate the atonement, and to make the substitution of Christ to be of none effect. If it could once be said, "Here is a spirit that God justified, and yet condemned it," where were God's immutability? There were no God at all. He were a changeable being, and not Jehovah. If it could be said, "Here is one that was espoused unto Christ in righteousness, a soul that was one with Jesus in vital union, yet he suffered this sheep of his flock to perish, this jewel of his crown to be cast away, this member of his body to rot into corruption, God's glory would be given to another, and he would not be what he now is. Oh, beloved, let us go one and all, whether we be unsaved sinners or backsliders, or may suspect ourselves to be either the one or the other, let us go to the dear fountain of his blood, whose open veins are the gates of healing to us; let us go again and touch the hem of his garment and be made whole, and together let us rejoice that he for his mercy's sake can save us, and magnify himself by the deed of mercy.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah xlviii. and xlix, 1—12.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A PERSUASIVE TO STEADFASTNESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 29TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."—Hebrews iii. 14.

How is it possible for the preacher to say too much about faith, or to extol this grace too highly! It is of vital importance, not at one stage of the Christian's history only, but throughout the whole of his career, from his setting out even till he reaches the goal where faith is turned to sight. By faith we begin the life of obedience to Christ, and by faith we continue to lead the life of holiness, for "the just *shall* live by faith." This is the point of honour and of safety with all the just—the justified ones. The whole compass of their well-being, though it take in the sternest sense of duty and the highest grant of privilege, is to believe simply, to rely implicitly, and to confide cheerfully, in their covenant God. The beginning of their confidence is a hopeful sign. Time will test its value. The result of that profession has yet to be shown. Hence it is necessary that the beginning of their confidence should be held fast, steadfast even unto the end. When we begin in the spirit we do not proceed with a hope to be made perfect in the flesh. We do not start with justification by faith, and then look for perfection by works. We do not lean upon Christ when we are little children, and then expect to run alone when we are men; but we live by drawing all our stores from him, while as yet we are naked, and poor, and miserable. When most enriched by his grace, we still have to say, and delight to say it, "all my springs are in thee." Faith at the beginning and faith at the close; faith all the way through is the one important matter. A failure in this, as we observed in our reading, shut Israel out of the promised land. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Unbelief is always the greatest mischief to the saints; hence they have need earnestly to watch against it. Faith is always the channel of innumerable blessings to them: they ought, therefore, most watchfully to maintain it.

We shall have to show the value of faith while we try to open up the text before us, in which I see, first, *a high privilege:* "we are made partakers of Christ;" and secondly, *by implication, a serious question*—the question whether or no we have been made partakers of Christ; and, then, in the third place, *an unerring test.* "We are made partakers of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

I. First, then, here is A VERY HIGH PRIVILEGE. "We are made partakers of Christ."

Observe that the text does *not* say, "we are made partakers *with* Christ." That would be true, a very precious truth too, for we are joint-heirs with Christ, and because all things are his, all things are ours. Christ holds for us the entire heritage of the faithful as our representative, and as we are made partakers with him in the Father's favour, and in the world's hatred, so we shall be partakers with him in the glory to be revealed, and in the bliss which endures for ever and ever. But here we have to do with our being partakers *of* Christ, rather than our being partakers *with* Christ.

Neither does it say we are made partakers of rich spiritual benefits. That is a fact which we may greet with thorough trust and hearty welcome. But, dear brethren, there is more than that here. To be partakers of pardoning mercy, to be partakers of renewing grace; to be partakers of the adoption, to be partakers of sanctification, preservation, and of all the other covenant blessings, is to possess an endowment of unspeakable value; but to be made "partakers of *Christ*," is to have all in one. You have all the flowers in one posy, all the gems in one necklace, all the sweet spices in one delicious compound. "We are made partakers of *Christ*"—of himself. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," and we are made partakers with him of all that he is ordained to be of God unto us—"wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." We are partakers of him; this is a privilege that no tongue can ever utter, no thought of finite mortal can ever grasp. But ah, it would need more time than we can afford, and far more spiritual teaching than we profess to have attained, to dive into this great and profound utterance, "We are made partakers of Christ." Still, as we stand spell-bound on the margin, let us venture to sail out just a little upon the surface of this ocean of goodness and of grandeur.

We are made partakers of Christ, beloved, when first of all by faith in him we procure a share in his merits. Sinful and sad, covered with transgressions and conscious of our shame, we come to the fountain filled with his blood, we washed in it, and were made white as snow. In that hour we became partakers of Christ. Christ is the substitute for sin. He suffered the penalty due from the unjust, for whom he died, to the violated law of God. When we believe in him we become partakers of those sufferings, or rather of the blessed fruit of them. The fact of his having borne what we ought to have borne becomes available to us. We present the memorial thereof at the altar of God, the throne of the heavenly grace, in prayers and professions, and in spiritual worship. The blood pleads our cause. The blood of Jesus, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, intercedes for mercy, not for vengeance. By

its rich virtue, its real value, its vital merit, it puts our sins for ever to death and lays our fears for ever to rest. Oh, how blessed to be a partaker of Christ, the sin-atoning sacrifice—to stand before God as a sinner that deserves nothing but damnation in himself, and yet knows by precious faith, that

> "Covered is my unrighteousness,
> From condemnation I am free—"

—that I am a partaker of the meritorious sacrifice of the great high Priest, who, having once offered one sacrifice for ever, now sits down, his work being done, at the right hand of God. What a privilege is this!

Moreover, we are partakers of Christ, inasmuch as his righteousness also becomes ours by imputation. We are not only freed from sin through his atonement, but we are rendered acceptable to God through his obedience as our responsible surety. We are "accepted in the beloved," we are justified through his righteousness. God seeth not us marred in the likeness of the first Adam who sinned; but he seeth us in Christ, the second Adam, remade, redeemed, restored, arrayed in garments of glory and beauty, with the Saviour's vesture on, as holy as the Holy One. He seeth "no sin in Jacob nor iniquity in Israel." When Jacob learns to trust in the Messiah, and Israel hides behind his representative, the Lord our Righteousness, Jacob ceases to wrestle, for he prevails, and Israel stands in honour, for he is a prince with God. Blessed, thrice blessed, are they who are partakers of Christ in his righteousness.

After we are thus saved from sin, and righteousness is imputed to us by faith, we further become partakers of Christ by living upon him, feeding on him. The sacramental table represents our fellowship. Though it does no more than represent it, it represents it well. At that table we eat bread, and we drink wine, and the body is thus fed, typifying that through meditation upon the incarnate Christ our soul is sustained, and by remembering the passion of the Lord, as the wine cup sets forth his blood, our spirits are comforted and revived, and our hearts are nourished. It is not that the bread is anything or the wine anything, but it is that Christ is everything to us. He is our daily bread, his atonement makes glad our heart—makes us "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Brethren, you know what it is to feed upon Jesus, and what satisfying food it is! When nothing else can give your soul rest and peace, remembering the incarnate God will do it, a study of the suffering Saviour will bring the refreshment and consolation you want. Jesus Christ when he is our food makes us to be partakers of himself.

But, is there not a doctrine concealed here of deeper significance? The union of believers with himself was among the latest of all the revelations which our blessed Lord when on earth made known to his disciples. With a parable he showed it, and without a parable he declared it plainly. Every true child of God is one with Christ. This union is set forth in Scripture by several images, to which we will just refer, but upon none of which can we just now enlarge. We are one with Christ and partakers of him as the stone is cemented to the foundation. It is built upon it, rests upon it, and, together with the foundation,

goes to make up the structure. So we are built into Christ by coherence and adhesion, joined to him, and made a spiritual house for the habitation of God by the Holy Ghost. We are made partakers with Christ by a union in which we lean and depend upon him. This union is further set forth by the vine and the branches. The branches are participators with the stem, the sap of the stem is for the branches. It treasures it up only to distribute it to them. It has no sap for itself alone, all its store of sap is for the branch. In like manner we are vitally one with Christ, and the grace that is in him is for us. It was given to him that he might distribute it to all his people. Furthermore, it is as the union of the husband with the wife, they are participators the one with the other. All that belongs to the husband the wife enjoys and shares with him. Meanwhile she shares himself, nay, he is all her own. Thus it is with Christ. We are married unto him—bethrothed unto him for ever in righteousness and in judgment, and all that he has is ours, and he himself is ours. All his heart belongs to each one of us. And then, too, as the members of the body are one with the head, as they derive their guidance, their happiness, their existence from the head, so are we made partakers of Christ. Oh, matchless participation! It is "a great mystery" saith the apostle; and, indeed, such a mystery it is as they only know who experience it. Even they cannot understand it fully; far less can they hope to set it forth so that carnal minds shall comprehend its spiritual meaning. The day cometh when we shall be partakers of Christ to the highest and uttermost degree that symbols can suggest, prophecy forestal, faith anticipate, or actual accomplishment bring to pass; for, albeit, though of all that our Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven we have a reversionary interest to-day by faith, we shall have a share in it by actual participation ere long.

Partakers of Christ! Yes, and therefore with him partakers in destiny. When he shall come his holy ones shall come with him. That he has risen from the dead is the earnest of their resurrection. At the day of his appearing they shall rise and participate in the fruition of his mediatorial work. Then, in the judging of the world, in the destruction of all his spiritual foes, in the great marriage-day when the bride shall have made herself ready, and he shall drink of the new wine in the kingdom of his Father, and in all else that is to come, too glorious to be described except by symbols like those of the Apocalypse, his people shall participate with him, for this honour have all his saints. All right and all might, all that can extol or delight, all that for ever and for ever shall contribute to the glory of Christ, shall be shared by all the faithful, for we are partakers not only with him, but *of* him—*of* Christ—therefore of all the surroundings of glory and honour that shall belong to him.

The language of the text reminds us that none of us have any title to this privilege by nature. "We are *made* partakers of Christ." From our first parentage we derived a very different entail. We all of woman born became partakers of the ruin of the first Adam, of the corruption of humanity, of the condemnation common to the entire race. Oh, to be *made* partakers! This is a work of grace, of sovereign omnipotent grace—a work which a man cannot sufficiently admire,

and for which he can never be sufficiently grateful. "We are made partakers of Christ." This is the Holy Ghost's work in us, to rend us away from the old wild olive, and to graft us into the good olive,—to dissolve the union between us and sin, and to cement a union between our souls and Christ,—to take us out of the Egyptian bondage and the Egyptian night in which we willingly sat, and to bring us into the liberty and the light wherewith Christ makes his people free and glad. This is work as grand and godlike as to create a world. For it let the Lord's name be magnified by each one of us if, indeed, we *have* been made partakers of Christ. *If*—I say; and that "if" leads me to the second point I proposed to consider.

II. The privilege of which we have spoken suggests A SOLEMN SEARCHING QUESTION. Are we made partakers of Christ? O beloved, many think they are who are not. There is nothing more to be dreaded than a supposititious righteousness, a counterfeit justification, a spurious hope. Better, I sometimes think, to have no religion than to have a false religion. I am quite certain that the man is much more likely to be saved who knows that he is naked, and poor, and miserable, than the man who says, "I am rich and increased in goods." It were infinitely better to take the road to heaven doubting than to go in another direction presuming. I am far better pleased with the soul that is always questioning, "Am I right?" than with him who has drunk the cup of arrogance till he is intoxicated with self-conceit and says, "I know my lot; the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; there is no need for self-examination in my case." Brethren, be assured of this; all men are not partakers of Christ: all baptised men are not partakers of Christ: all churchmen are not partakers of Christ: all dissenters are not made partakers of Christ: all members of this church are not made partakers of Christ: all ministers, all elders, all bishops, are not made partakers of Christ. Yea, all apostles were not made partakers of Christ. One of them, Christ's familiar friend, who kept the little purse which held all the Master's earthly store, lifted up his heel against him, betrayed him with a tender treacherous kiss, and became the son of perdition. He was a companion of Christ, but not a partaker of him?

Am *I* made a partaker of Christ? Multiply the question till each individual among you makes it his own. In this congregation there are various classes. There are probably some here who are only hearers —hearers about Christ, not partakers of Christ. It is one thing to hear about a banquet; it is quite another thing to be fed at it. It is one thing in the wilderness to hear of rippling streams, and quite another to stoop down and drink the cooling draught—one thing for the prisoner by night to dream of liberty, or by day to read of roaming free through his native country, another thing to get rid of the chain—one thing to hear of pardon, another thing to be pardoned—one thing to hear of heaven, another thing to go there. O my dear hearers! some of you are as familiar with the gospel as you are with the house you live in; yet, though you live in the house, you never live in the gospel, and I fear you never will. You hear it, and hear it, that is all. God grant you may not have to hear of your hearing in another world, where it shall be laid down among the chief of your sins that you were of those

who, when they heard did provoke—provoke because they rejected what they ought to have received.

Others go farther than hearing. They become professors. May I remind you—and I would not judge anyone harshly—certainly no man more harshly than I would myself—it is one thing to profess to be a partaker of Christ, and another thing to be made a partaker of Christ. I may profess that I am rich and be all the while a bankrupt, a dishonest bankrupt for having made the profession. I may protest that I am in health, while a deadly cancer may lurk within. I may delare that I am honest, but it will not clear me before the judge if I am proved a thief. I may avow that I am loyal, but it would not save my life if I were convicted of high treason. Professions; ah, I fear they are in many cases but a painted pageantry that makes the road to hell attractive. Professions there are not unfrequently upon which we may gaze with a vacant wonder and turn away with a cold shudder, as from the sombre gaudiness of a funeral, wherein prancing steeds, stately mutes, nodding plumes, and velvet palls adorn the obsequies of the dead. God save us from a lifeless profession! May we never be like certain trees, of which Bunyan said, that they were green outside, but inwardly they were so rotten that they were only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box. Many professors are too fair not to be false; too comely outside not to be loathsome within; for there is an over-doing of the sepulchre's whitewash. You feel convinced that there would not be so much whitewashing without if there were not a good deal of rottenness inside to be concealed. Essence of roses or of lavender is sweet, but much scent excites much suspicion. Oh, let us, each one who professes to-night, say to himself, "I was baptised on a profession of my faith, but was I ever baptised into Christ? When the sacred name of the triune God was named on me, did I then enter into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? I have come often to the communion table; but have I communed with Christ there? My name is on the church-book, but is it written in heaven? I have said to others I am a Christian, but am I in very deed known unto Christ? or will he say unto me in that day, 'I never knew you: depart from me ye workers of iniquity'?"

These are solemn questionings. Many persons are temporary followers of Christ, and outwardly, as far as the human eye can follow, they appear to be real followers of Christ. I believe in the final perseverance of the saints; but I do not know, nor can any man know, how near a man may approach to the likeness of a saint and yet after all apostatise. Nor is any one of us able to say of himself, or of any of his fellow members, "We never shall fall away." I remember one whose voice I, and many of you, often heard in prayer, and we enjoyed the exercise of his gifts. The man had been reclaimed from the lowest class of society, and he distinguished himself by his devotion in such a way that he was accepted as a church officer among us. I remember, when the first charge of sin was brought against him, and of very grievous sin, one among us said, "If that man is not a child of God I am not a child of God." The expression seemed to me too strong, but in my heart I almost joined in it. I was ready to pronounce him innocent before I investigated the charges. I felt certain that there

could not be in such a man as that the impurity laid at his door; yet it was there, it was all there, and worse than tongue can tell. He repented; and though not received into the church because the profession of repentance did not seem to be all we could wish it to be, yet there was a turning aside from sin for awhile. But he went into it again, and he wallowed in it. He died in it. As far as we could any of us judge, he perished in it. He went from bad to worse. I feel I might say without uncharitableness this man carried his iniquity, as far as human judgment could track him. Therefore, without prejudice to the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, which I implicitly believe, I will not venture to say of any among you—much less will I venture to say it of myself, that I am sure I am so made a partaker of Christ that I shall hold fast my confidence to the end. I hope so. I rest in Christ, trusting in him. The possibility is that I am deceiving myself; the possibility is that you may be self-deceivers. At any rate, it is so far a possibility that I would beseech you to have no confidence but such as the Holy Ghost gives you; to put no reliance as to the future anywhere but in the eternal arms; have no assurance but that assurance which is based upon the word of God, and the witness of the Spirit within your soul. That can give you infallible assurance. Apart from that, I repeat it again, I will say neither of you, nor of myself, that I can be sure, with all the profession that is made, that you are partakers of Christ. Some go even farther than being temporary followers of Christ, and yet after all perish. They maintain a consistent profession before the eye of men throughout the whole of their lives, as vessels that navigate the whole of the sea and go down in the harbour. There are soldiers that have held out and fought valiantly up to the very moment of victory, and then have run away. And there are professors that have been unexceptional in their lives, whose character has been apparently without a blemish, and even those who knew them in private could not detect any serious flaw in their conduct; yet, for all that, there was a worm at the root; a fly in the pot of ointment; a failure as to the sincerity of their grace. They had not, after all, the true faith which hangs upon Christ, and they did not persevere in heart, though they appeared to persevere in life. The difference between the Christian and the professor is sometimes such as only God can discern. There is a path which the eagle's eye hath not seen, and the lion's whelp hath not traversed—a path of life into which God can bring us, and of which it may be said that he knows all who are in it. But, there is a something like it, a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. There is a counterfeit of the true metal of grace so well manufactured, that only omniscience itself can tell which is the reprobate silver, and which is the pure shekel of the sanctuary. Grave reason have we, then, for raising the question as to whether we are made partakers of Christ or not.

III. Now we come to THE UNERRING TEST. Patience comes to the aid of faith here. Evidences accumulate till the issue is conclusive. "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

This passage may be read in two ways, neither of which violates

the literal meaning of the original, either of which may express to us the mind of the Spirit—as we have it in our version, "the beginning of our confidence," or, as I would rather translate it, "the foundation of our confidence," the basis on which our confidence rests.

Take your choice. We will expound and vindicate both. That man is a partaker of Christ who holds fast the faith he had at first, having received it, not as an education, but as an intuition of his spiritual life; not as an argument, but as an axiom he could not challenge, or rather as an oracle he received joyfully and bowed to submissively. The confidence which is based upon the true foundation, even Christ Jesus, is simple and clear as one's own consciousness. It asks no proof because it admits no doubt. In vain the sceptic comes to me now and says, "Sir, you are asleep, and dreaming." I answer, "No, sir, I am speaking to these thousands, and they are listening to me." Even so, when I first believed the Gospel story it was with a childlike feeling that it was so, and I knew it. The man who is not a partaker of Christ hears the gospel, professes to believe it, and in some measure acts accordingly; but he perishes because this pure unwavering faith does not abide in him. He has not the faith of God's elect which never can be destroyed. He has only a notion, a creed of his own making, and not a faith of the Spirit's giving.

Now, beloved, what was the beginning of our confidence? Well, the beginning of my confidence was, "I am a sinner, Christ is a Saviour; and I rest on him to save me." Long before I began with Christ he had begun with me; but when I began with him it was, as the law writers say, "*In formâ pauperis*," after the style of a wretched mendicant—a pauper who had nothing of his own, and looked to Christ for everything. I know when I first cast my eye to his dear cross, and rested in him, I had not any merit of my own, it was all demerit. I was not deserving, except that I felt I was hell-deserving: I had not even a shade of virtue that I could confide in. It was all over with me. I had come to an extremity. I could not have found a farthing's worth of goodness in myself if I had been melted down. I seemed to be all rottenness, a dunghill of corruption, nothing better, but something a great deal worse. I could truly join with Paul at that time, and say that my own righteousnesses were dung. A strong expression he used; but I do not suppose he felt it to be strong enough. He says, "I count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him." Well, that is how we began with Christ. We were nothing at all, and Jesus Christ was all in all. Now, brethren, we are not made partakers of Christ unless we hold this fast to the end. Have you got beyond that? Are you something creditable in your own estimation? I am afraid of you. Are you richer now in yourselves than you were then? I am afraid of you, brethren. Do you mind the place you used to stand in? you dared not lift your eyes to heaven, but cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Now in Christ you have a far nobler place than that, for you are made to sit with him in the heavenly places. But, I ask you, apart from Christ, have you any different place from that of deep self-abasement? If you have, you have not held the beginning of your confidence fast even until

now. Begin to suspect yourself. This is the position always to take "having nothing and yet possessing all things."

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

Such is the beginning of our confidence. Brethren, where else was the beginning of your confidence? May we not say of it that it was only and wholly, entirely and exclusively, in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ? In the beginning of your confidence you did not rely upon any ceremonies, nor upon priests, nor upon your Bible readings, nor upon your prayings, nor upon your feelings, nor your experiences, nor your orthodoxy, nor your knowledge of doctrine, nor upon your works, nor your preachings, your sanctifications or your mortifications. No, in the beginning of your confidence the one foundation was *Jesus only*. Nothing save Jesus would I know. Oh, if on that day, I had met with a man who had any trust in his own righteousness, I know I should have quarrelled with him. If he had told me that he hoped that Jesus Christ would help him to save himself, I could have wept over him to think he should be such a fool. Why, Christ is all or nothing. He must save us from top to bottom, or we never shall be saved at all. If our foundation is partly on the rock of his finished work, and partly on the sand of our own unworthy doing, the whole house totters and it must come down.

Well, brethren, is there any correspondence between the beginning of your confidence and your present look-out? Had you anything except Christ to depend upon in the hour you first believed? Is there ought now added to that one foundation that God has laid, or hath your trust been supplemented by any fresh conceit of your own? Are you faithless? God is faithful. With you, it may be yea and nay; with him it is yea and amen. Some of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt depended upon God. They saw that he had divided the Red Sea, and rained down the manna, and refreshed them with streams in the desert, and so they believed, but their faith did not hold out. While they could see miracles of mercy, they relied on God, with nothing else to rely on; but when they got into a little difficulty they did not hold fast the beginning of their confidence unto the end, for they began to lose faith in Moses, or to confide in a golden calf. So there are some that begin, in a time of weakness, calamity, or despondence, by saying, "I trust in Christ, as a sinner." They get beyond that when they recover from their temporary depression. Then they qualify their confessions after their altered circumstances, and elect their religion after their own deliberate choice. But the God of Israel will not allow it. He will not have us put any trust but in his dear Son. We must be stripped naked of everything but that which Christ spins. We must have all our bread mouldy till we cast it out because we loathe it, and we must feed on nothing but the bread of heaven. If we get beyond that and feed on anything else, we are not made partakers of him, for we have not held fast the beginning of our confidence.

Let me call back your thoughts again, beloved, to the love of your

espousals, when you acknowledged the Lord and went after him into the wilderness. Did you not then have confidence in Christ of a very humble character? Oh, at that time you did not want to be among the first of God's people to play the part of Diotrephes. When you were at the foot of the cross, and looked up as a poor sinner, you had no notion about being a distinguished man in the church. I know it did not come into my head that day that I should be a leader in God's Israel. Ah, no, if I might but sit in the corner of his house, or be a door keeper, it had been enough for me. If, like the dog under the table, I might get a crumb of his mercy, were it but flavoured by his hand, because he had broken it off, that is all I wanted. That is just how we ought always to live—lowly, humble, gentle, and broken-spirited, and ready to be anything, so that Christ may be glorified. It shows the risings of the old nature when we get to be such consequential people that if anybody should say a hard word, we wonder, or if anybody slanders us, instead of saying, "Ah, if he knew us he could say something a good deal worse," we are in a high and mighty temper because our brilliant character is injured.

Verily, I think, that when I was first converted to God, if the Lord had said, "I have taken you into my house, and I am going to make use of you, and you shall be a door-mat for the saints to wipe their feet on," I should have said, "Ah, happy shall I be if I but take the filth off their blessed feet, for I love God's people; and may I minister to them in the slightest degree, it shall be my delight." But, when we get away from that position we are in danger. If we are made partakers of Christ, the proof will be in our continuing to be of a meek and lowly spirit—willing to serve him in any capacity—in our becoming like little children; for "except we become as little children, we shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." Little children we were in the beginning of our confidence; little children we must continue to be, or else we may gravely question whether we have been made partakers of Christ.

When we were first made partakers of Christ, we received him very gratefully. How thankful we were for one look from Jesus' eye. Half a promise seemed precious in those days. The sermon, though it was uncouth perhaps, if full of Christ, fed us to the full. Now, alas, how many professors despise precious truth if it does not happen to be clothed in the most polished phrases; they run hither and thither where there is no food for them: not hungering and thirsting after righteousness as of yore, they admire the banquet spread out with all flowers and no fruit: they look after gaudy periods, where pure silver and polished sham do sparkle, though there be no food for the soul to feed on. Did they hold fast the beginning of their confidence, they would prize the truth and love the truth, and account that if it were but the truth, it did not matter in what shape it came to them, so long as they could get hold of a promise, have a smile from Christ's face, or enjoy one ray of the blessed Spirit's consolation in their souls. But now the starving beggars have become dainty epicures; those who once were glad enough to come and feast on broken crusts from the Master's table, become connoisseurs of their Master's food; their soul "loatheth this light bread," though it is the

bread of angels, and drops from the granaries of God. We should suspect ourselves, when we get into that squeamish condition. Such a proud captious state of heart does not evidence that we have been made partakers of Christ at all.

When we first received our confidence, we were obedient in word and deed. I wish all disciples of Christ had the like scrupulous conscience. I speak my own experience. The first week after I was converted to God, I felt afraid to put one foot before another for fear I should do wrong; when I thought over the day if there had been a failure in my temper, or if there had been a frothy word spoken, or something done amiss, I did chasten myself sorely, and had I known at that time anything to be my Lord's will, I think I should not have hesitated to do it; to me it would not have mattered whether it was a fashionable thing or an unfashionable thing, if it was according to his word. Oh, to do his will! to follow him whithersoever he would have me go! Why, then it seemed as though I should never, never, never be slack in keeping his commandments. Dear brethren, have you held fast the beginning of your confidence? I smite upon my own breast when I remember that, in that respect, I have not held fast the beginning of my confidence. To the cross again! Beloved, if any of you have doubts aroused in your mind by such bitter reflections upon yourselves, do not dispute with your doubts: go to the cross again. Never dispute with the devil. He can always beat you. Go straight to the cross. If he says, "Thou art no saint," say then, "Very likely I am not; but there is one thing even *thou* canst not deny—thou canst not say I am *not a sinner;* a sinner I am. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; and if I never trusted him before, I will begin now. If I never yet did know the life of God, I will look to his death forthwith. Oh, if I never was healed of the disease of sin, there is healing in those dear wounds, and I, by faith, will have it while yet it is called to-day." Jesus, I trust thee; I trust thee wholly, and thee alone. I have heard that some years ago there was a coal-pit in work, the shaft of which by some means got blocked up, and the men could not get out of it. They were very nearly perishing. One of them had heard that there was an old working which led to another mine, and though he was afraid it might be blocked up, yet the best thing they could do would be to go along, if, perhaps, they might come to the mouth of another shaft. This old working had not been traversed for some time; it never was very lofty. They had to go along on their hands and knees, and generally needed to crawl lying flat on the ground. At length they came to the mouth of that old shaft, were soon extricated, and they gladly found their way to the upper air again. Peradventure, some of you have been living heretofore by frames and feelings; that experience has been the shaft by which you have been coming and going; and this shaft has been blocked up to-night. Well, I am not sorry for it. Come, now, brethren, let us all go along on our hands and knees where the sinners go. Let us crawl to the old shaft: let us prostrate ourselves, confessing, "Lord, I am vile, conceived in sin. Lord, I am unworthy: Lord, I am earthly, selfish, devilish. Lord, I am a mass of wounds and a mass of loathsomeness. I am unworthy of thy favour and thy

love." Let us just creep along in that fashion till we come to Christ, and say,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

You will find that old shaft is not shut up. There is light. Look up! There is the cross above you. Jesus is still willing to receive sinners, still able to save sinners, for he is "exalted" on high "to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins." O come to him just that way; and, brother, when you get back to Christ in that way by which you went years ago, the advice of the text, with which I will sum up all, is, keep on coming to him in that same way always. Keep on coming always. Keep on coming always. Perhaps you have been on the top of a mountain such as the Rigi or as Snowden. You know these mountains do not move. They are good solid rock under your feet. But people erect platforms on the top of them to see the sun rise a little sooner, or something of that sort. From the top of one of those platforms a man may come down with a crash and break his limbs. That is something like our erections which we put up over our simple faith in Christ. Our beautiful frames and feelings and experiences—they will come down with a crash some day, for they are rotten stuff; but, when a man stands upon this—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I am resting upon him: he is all my salvation and all my desire: his precious blood is all my confidence. The love of his heart, the power of his arm, the merit of his plea,—here I rest myself,"—O beloved, there is no fear of that confidence ever giving way beneath your feet. There may you stand and serenely rejoice when worlds shall melt and the pillars of the earth shall reel. God bless you, and keep you ever holding the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end. So shall it be proved beyond question that you are partakers of Christ.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews iii.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 24TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."—Romans viii. 29.

YOU will have noticed that in this chapter, Paul has been expounding a very deep inward, spiritual experience. He has written concerning the spirit of bondage, and the spirit of adoption; the infirmities of the flesh, and the helpings of the spirit; the waiting for the redemption of the body, and the groanings which cannot be uttered. It was most natural, therefore, that a deep spiritual experience should bring him to a clear perception of the doctrines of grace, for such an experience is a school in which alone those great truths are effectually learned. A lack of depth in the inner life accounts for most of the doctrinal error in the church. Sound conviction of sin, deep humiliation on account of it, and a sense of utter weakness and unworthiness naturally conduct the mind to the belief of the doctrines of grace, while shallowness in these matters leaves a man content with a superficial creed. Those teachings which are commonly called Calvinistic doctrines are usually most beloved and best received by those who have had much conflict of soul, and so have learned the strength of corruption and the necessity of grace.

Note, also, that Paul in this chapter has been treating of the sufferings of this present time; and though by faith he speaks of them as very inconsiderable compared with the glory to be revealed, yet we know that they were not inconsiderable in his case. He was a man of many trials; he went from one tribulation to another for Christ's sake; he swam through many seas of affliction to serve the church. I do not wonder, therefore, that in his epistles he often discourses upon the doctrines of foreknowledge, and predestination, and eternal love, because these are a rich cordial for a fainting spirit. To be cheered under many things, which otherwise would depress him, the believer may betake himself to the matchless mysteries of the grace of God, which are wines on the lees well refined. Sustained by distinguishing grace, a man

learns to glory in tribulations also; and strengthened by electing love, he defies the hatred of the world and the trials of life. Suffering is the college of orthodoxy. Many a Jonah, who now rejects the doctrines of the grace of God, only needs to be put into the whale's belly and he will cry out with the soundest free-grace man, "Salvation is of the Lord." Prosperous professors, who do no business amid David's billows and waterspouts, may set small store by the blessed anchorage of eternal purpose and everlasting love; but those who are "tossed with tempest, and not comforted, are of another mind." Let these few sentences suffice for a preface. I utter them not in the spirit of controversy, but the reverse.

Our text begins by the expression, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate," and many senses have been given to this word "foreknow," though in this case one commends itself beyond every other. Some have thought that it simply means that God predestinated men whose future history he foreknew. The text before us cannot be so understood, because the Lord foreknows the history of every man, and angel, and devil. So far as mere prescience goes, every man is foreknown, and yet no one will assert that all men are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus. But, it is further asserted that the Lord foreknew who would exercise repentance, who would believe in Jesus, and who would persevere in a consistent life to the end. This is readily granted, but a reader must wear very powerful magnifying spectacles before he will be able to discover that sense in the text. Upon looking carefully at my Bible again I do not perceive such a statement. Where are those words which you have added, "Whom he did foreknow to repent, to believe, and to persevere in grace"? I do not find them either in the English version or in the Greek original. If I could so read them the passage would certainly be very easy, and would very greatly alter my doctrinal views; but, as I do not find those words there, begging your pardon, I do not believe in them. However wise and advisable a human interpolation may be, it has no authority with us; we bow to holy Scripture, but not to glosses which theologians may choose to put upon it. No hint is given in the text of foreseen virtue any more than of foreseen sin, and, therefore, we are driven to find another meaning for the word. We find that the word "know" is frequently used in Scripture, not only for knowledge, but also for favour, love, and complacency. Our Lord Jesus Christ will say, in the judgment, concerning certain persons, "I never knew you," yet in a sense he knew them, for he knows every man; he knows the wicked as well as the righteous; but there the meaning is, "I never knew you in such a respect as to feel any complacency in you or any favour towards you." See also John x. 14, 15, and 2 Tim. ii. 19. In Rom. xi. 2, we read, "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew," where the sense evidently has the idea of fore-love; and it is so to be understood here. Those whom the Lord looked upon with favour as he foresaw them, he has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. They are, as Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians, "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will."

I am anxious not to tarry over controverted matters, but to reach the subject of my sermon this morning. Here we have in the text

conformity to Christ spoken of as *the aim of predestination;* we have, secondly, *predestination as the impelling force by which this conformity is to be achieved;* and we have, thirdly, *the firstborn himself set before us as the ultimate end of the predestination and of the conformity.*—"that HE might be the first-born among many brethren."

I. Mark then, with care, that OUR CONFORMITY TO CHRIST IS THE SACRED OBJECT OF PREDESTINATION. Into predestination itself I will not now pry. The deeper things shall be left with God. I think it was Bishop Hall who once said, "I thank God I am not of his counsels, but I am of his court." If I cannot understand I will not question, for I am not his counsellor, but I will adore and obey, for I am his servant. Now, to-day, seeing we are here taught the object of his predestination, it will be our business to labour after it, to bless God that he has set such an object before him, and pray that we may be partakers in it. Here stands the case. Man was originally made in the image of God, but by sin he has defaced that image, and now we who are born into this world are fashioned, not in the heavenly image of God, but in the earthy image of the fallen Adam. "We have borne," says the Apostle, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, "the image of the earthy." The Lord in boundless grace has resolved that a company whom no man can number, called here "many brethren," shall be restored to his image, in the particular form in which his Eternal Son displays it. To this end Jesus Christ came into the world and bore our image, that we, through his grace, might bear his image. He became a partaker of our infirmities and sicknesses that we might be partakers of the divine nature in all its excellence and purity. Now, therefore, the one thing to which the Lord is working us through his Spirit, both by providence and by grace, is the likeness of the Lord from heaven. He is evermore transforming the chosen, removing the defilement of sin, and moulding them after the perfect model of his Son, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who is the firstborn amongst the "many brethren."

Now, observe, that this conformity to Christ lies in several things. First, we are to be conformed to him as to our *nature.* What was the nature of Christ, then, as divine? We must not pry into it, but we know that he was verily of the nature of God. "Begotten not made," says the Athanasian Creed, and it says truly too, "being of one substance with the Father." Now, we also, though we at our conversion are new creatures, are also said to be "*begotten* again into a lively hope." To be begotten is something more than to be made: this is a more personal work of God; and that which is begotten is in closer affinity to himself than that which is only created. As Christ was, as the only-begotten of the Father, far above mere creatures; so also to be begotten of God, in our case, means far more than even the first and perfect creation could imply. As to his humanity our blessed Lord, when he came into this world, underwent a birth which was a remarkable type of our second birth. He was born into this world in a very humble place, amidst the oxen, and in the manger; but yet he lacked not the songs of angels, and the adoration of the heavenly hosts. Even so we also were born of the Spirit without human observation; men of this world saw no glory whatsoever in our regeneration, for it was not

performed by mystic rites, or with sacerdotal pomp. The Spirit of God found us in our low estate, and quickened us without outward display. Yet at that self-same moment, where human eyes saw nothing seraphic eyes beheld marvels of grace, and angels in heaven rejoiced over one sinner that repented, singing once again "glory to God in the highest." When our Lord was born a few choice spirits welcomed his birth; an Anna and a Simeon were ready to take the new-born child into their arms and bless God for him: and even so there were some that hailed our new birth with much thanksgiving; friends and well-wishers who had watched for our salvation were glad when they beheld in us the true heavenly life, and gladly did they take us up into the arms of Christian nurture. Perhaps, also, there was one who had travailed in birth till Christ was formed in us the hope of glory, and how happy was that spirit to see us born unto God; how did our spiritual parent ponder each gracious word which we uttered, and thank God for the good signs of grace which could be found in our conversation. Then, too, a worse than Herod sought to kill us. Satan was eager that the new-born child of grace should be put to death, and, therefore, sent forth fierce temptations to slay us; but the Lord found a shelter for our infant spiritual life, and preserved the young child alive. In us the living and incorruptible seed abode and grew. As many of you as have been born again have been conformed to the image of Christ in the matter of his birth, and you are now partakers of his nature. It is not possible for us to be divine, yet it is written that we are made "partakers of the divine nature." We cannot be precisely as God is, yet as we have borne the image of the earthy we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, whatever that image may be. The new birth as surely stamps us with the image of Christ as our first birth impressed us with a resemblance to the fathers of our flesh. Our first birth gave us humanity; our second birth allies us with Deity. As we were conceived in sin at the first, and shapen in iniquity, even so in regeneration our new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us. He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Furthermore, this conformity to Christ lies in *relationship* as well as in nature. Our Lord is the Son of the Highest,—the Son of God; and truly, beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Jehovah has declared that he will be a father unto us, and that we shall be his sons and his daughters. As surely as Jesus is a son, so surely are we, for the same Spirit bears witness to both, as it is written "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." When Jesus came into the world as God's Son, he was not left without attesting proofs. His first public appearance, when he came to the waters of baptism, was signalled by a voice out of the excellent glory, which said, "this is my beloved Son," and the descending Spirit, like a dove, rested upon him. So is it also with us. The voice of God in the word has testified to us our Heavenly Father's love; and the Holy Spirit has borne witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. When first we dared to come forward and say "we are on the Lord's side,"

some of us had sacred tokens of sonship which have never been forgotten by us, and oftentimes since then we have received renewed seals of our adoption from the Great Father of our spirits. "He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself," so that he can with his brethren say plainly "we know that we have passed from death unto life." God has given us full assurance, and infallible testimony, and in all this we rejoice. We have believed in Jesus, and it is written, "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name."

Our Lord was declared to be the Son of God by the actions which he performed, both towards God and towards man. As a Son he served his Father, you could see the nature of God in him, in his deep sympathy with God and in his exact imitation of God. Whatever God would have done under the circumstances, that Jesus did. You perceive at once, by his deeds, that his nature was godlike. His works bore witness of him. It was evermore most clear that he acted towards God as a son towards a father. Now, in proportion as God's determination has been carried out in us, we also act to God as children towards a loving father, and whereas the children of darkness speak of their own, and like their father, who is a liar, speak the lie; and like their father, who is a murderer, act out wrath and bitterness, even so the children of God speak the truth, for God is true, and they are full of love, for God is love; and their life is light, for their God is light. They feel that they must act, under the circumstances in which they are placed, as they would suppose Jesus would have acted, who is the Son of the ever blessed Father. Moreover, Christ wrought miracles of mercy towards men, which proved him to be the Son of God. It is true we can work no miracles, yet can we do works which mark God's children. We cannot break the bread and multiply it, we can, however, generously distribute what we have, and thus in feeding the hungry we shall prove ourselves children of our Father who is in heaven; we cannot heal the diseased with our touch, still we can care for the sick, and so in love towards the suffering we can prove ourselves to be children of the tender and ever-pitiful God. But our Lord has told us that greater works than his own shall we do, because he is gone to his Father; and these greater works we do. We can work spiritual miracles. To-day, can we not stand at the grave of the dead sinner, and say, "Lazarus, come forth"? And has not God often made the dead to rise at our word, by the power of his Spirit! To-day, also, we can preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, casting it about us as it were as our garment, and he that toucheth the hem thereof shall he not also be made whole to-day, even as when Jesus was among men? This day, if we do not break fish and barley loaves, we bring you better food; this day, if we cannot give to men opened eyes and unstopped ears, yet in the teaching of the gospel of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit, the mental eye is cleansed, and the soul's ear also is purged; so that in every child of God, in proportion as he labours in the power of the Spirit for Christ, the works which he does bear witness of him that he is the son of God. His zeal in doing them proves that he has the spirit of a child of God, and the result of those works proves that God works in him as he will never do in any but his own children. Thus, in

relationship, as well as in nature, we are conformed to the image of Christ.

Thirdly, we are to be conformed to the image of Christ in our *experience.* This is the part of the subject from which our craven spirit often shrinks, but if we were wise it would not be so. What was the experience of Christ in this world? for that ours will be. We may sum it up as referring to God, to men, to the devil, and to all evil.

His experience with regard to God, what was that? "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Though without sin, he was not without suffering. The firstborn of the divine family was more sorely chastened than any other of the household; he was smitten of God and afflicted till, as the climax of all, he cried *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.* Oh, the bitterness of that cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was the father bruising the firstborn son; and, if you and I, brethren, are to be conformed to the image of the firstborn, though we may expect from God much fatherly love, we may also reckon that it will show itself in parental discipline. If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons; but, if ye be true sons, like to the firstborn, the rod will make you smart, and sometimes you will have to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" If we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son, the Lord has predestinated us to much tribulation, and through it shall we inherit the kingdom.

Next survey our dear covenant Head in his experience in relation to men. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." "He was despised and rejected of men." He said, "Reproach hath broken mine heart, and I am full of heaviness." Now, brethren, in the very proportion in which we are conformed to the image of Christ we shall have to "go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach;" for the disciple, if he be a true disciple, is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they call them of his household by some yet more opprobrious title, if they can invent it. The saints of God must not expect crowns where Christ found a cross; they must not reckon to ride in triumph through those streets which saw the Saviour hurried to a malefactor's death. We must suffer with him if we would be glorified with him. Fellowship in his sufferings is needful to communion with his glory.

Then, consider our Lord's experience with regard to the prince of the power of the air. Satan was no friend to Christ, but finding him in the desert he came to him with this accursed "if"—"If thou be the Son of God." With that attack upon his Sonship the fiend commenced the battle. "If thou be the Son of God." You know how thrice he assailed him with those temptations which are most likely to be attractive to poor humanity, but Jesus overcame them all. The arch enemy, the old dragon, was always nibbling at the heel of our great Michael, who has for ever crushed his head. We are predestinated to be conformed

to Christ in that respect; the serpent's subtlety and cruelty will assail us also. A tempted head involves tempted members. Satan desires to have us and to sift us as wheat. He attacked the Shepherd, and he will never cease to worry the sheep. Inasmuch as we are of the seed of the woman, there must be enmity between us and the seed of the serpent.

And, as to all evil, our Lord's entire life was one perpetual battle. He was fighting evil in the high places and evil in the low, evil among the priests and evil among the people, evil in a religious dress, in Pharisaism, and evil in the dress of philosophy amongst the Sadducees; he fought it everywhere: he was the foe of everything that was wrong, false, selfish, unholy or impure. And you and I must be conformed to Christ in this respect. We are to be holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one. We are chosen out of the world to be a peculiar people, adversaries to all evil, never sheathing our sword till we enter into our rest. We are to be like him then in nature, in relation, in experience.

Fourthly. We are to be conformed to Christ Jesus as to *character*. Time and ability alike fail us to speak of this. I only pray that God's Spirit may make our lives to speak of it. He was consecrated to God; so are we to be. The zeal of God's house ate him up; so should it consume us also. He went about his Father's business; so should we ever be occupied. Towards man he was all love; it becomes us to be the same. He was gentle and kind and tender; as he was, so are we to be in this world. He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; neither should we. Yet was he stern in the denunciation of all evil; so should we be. Purity, holiness, unselfishness, all the virtues, should glow in us as they shone in him. Ah, and blessed be God they will too, by the work of the Spirit. Our text speaks not only of what we ought to be, but of what we shall be, for we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. My brethren, what a glorious model! Behold it, wonder at it, and bless God for it. You are not to be conformed to the mightiest of the apostles, you will one day be purer than were Paul or John while here below; you are not to be conformed to the sublimest of the prophets, you shall be like the prophets' Master; you are not to be content with your own conception of that which is beautiful and lovely, but God's perfect conception incarnated in his own Son is that to which you shall certainly be brought by the predestination of God.

Just a sentence upon another point. We are to be conformed to the image of his Son, fifthly, as to our *inheritance*, for he is heir of all things, and what less are we heirs of, since all things are ours? He is heir of this world. "Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." We see not yet all things put under man, but we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour; and in the person of Christ Jesus this day we, the men who are made in his image, have dominion over all things, being all made kings and priests unto God, and in Christ Jesus ordained to reign with him for

ever and ever. "If children then heirs," says the apostle; therefore, whatever Christ has we have, and though we may be very poor and unknown, yet whatever belongs to Christ belongs to us. "The good of all the land of Egypt is yours," said Joseph to his brethren, and Jesus saith this to all his people, "All are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

I must close this point—time goes much too swiftly this morning when descanting upon this delightful theme—by observing that we are to be conformed to Christ in his *glory*. We will think of our bodies, for that is a point surrounded with consolation, since he shall change our vile body and make it like unto his glorious body. We are like Adam now in weakness and pain, and we shall soon be like him in death, returning to the ground whence we were taken; but we shall rise again to a better life, and then shall we wear in glory and incorruption the image of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. Conceive the beauties of the risen Redeemer. Let your faith and your imagination work together to pourtray the unutterable glories of Immanuel, God with us, as he sits at the right hand of the Father. Such and so bright shall our glories be in the day of the redemption of the body. We shall behold his glory, we shall be with him where he is, and we shall be ourselves glorious in his glory. Is he exalted? you also shall be lifted up. Is he a King? you shall not be uncrowned. Is he a victor? you also shall bear a palm. Is he full of joy and rejoicing? so also shall your soul be filled to the brim with delights. Where he is every saint shall be ere long.

Thus much upon the sacred end of predestination.

II. Now, observe that PREDESTINATION IS THE IMPELLING FORCE TOWARDS THIS CONFORMITY. This truth divides itself thus: it is the *will* of God that conforms us to Christ's image rather than our own will. It is our will now, but it was God's will when it was not our will, and it only became according to our will when we were converted, because God's grace had made us willing in the day of its power. We cannot be made like Christ unwillingly; a consenting will is essential to the likeness of Christ; unwilling obedience would be disobedience. Naturally we never will towards good without God, but God works in us to will and to do. God treats us as men responsible and intelligent, and not as stone or metal; he made us free agents, and he treats us as such. We are willing now to be conformed to the image of Jesus, yea, we are more than willing, we are anxious and desirous for it; but still the main and first motive power lay not in our will, but in his will, and to-day the immutable force which is best to be depended upon does not lie in our fickle, feeble will, but in the unchanging and omnipotent will of God. The force that is conforming us to Christ is the will of God in predestination.

And so, too, it is rather God's *work* than our work. We are to work with God in the matter of our becoming like to Christ. We are not to be passive like wood or marble; we are to be prayerful, watchful, fervent, diligent, obedient, earnest, and believing, but still the work is God's. Sanctification is the Lord's work in us. "Thou hast wrought all our works in us." From the first, and now, and to the last, "he that hath wrought us to the self-same thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the Spirit." There is no holiness in us of our own

creating; no good thing in us of our own fashioning. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be praise." Still, true as it is that we are free agents, yet the Lord is the potter and we are the clay upon the wheel, and it is his work, and not ours, that makes us like to Christ. If there be a touch of our finger anywhere upon the vessel, it mars and does not beautify. It is only where God's hand has been that the vessel begins to assume the form of the model.

Therefore, beloved, all the *glory* must be unto God and not to us. It is a great honour to any man to be like Christ; God does not intend that his children should have no honour, for he puts honour upon his own people; but, still, the true glory lies with him, since he has made us and not we ourselves. Cannot we say this morning with thankful hearts, "By the grace of God I am what I am"? and do we not feel that we shall lay all our honours, whatever they may be, at his dear feet, who hath according to his abundant mercy predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son?

III. Now I must come to the third point, upon which with brevity. It sweetly appears that the ULTIMATE END OF ALL THIS IS CHRIST. "Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that HE,"—"that HE"—God is always driving at something for him, his well-beloved Son. He aims at his own glory in the glory of his dear Son; if he blesses us the text of last Sabbath is still true, "not for your sakes do I this;" it is for the sake of a higher, a better one than we are, it is "that *he* might be the first-born." Now, if I understand the passage before us, it means this. First, God predestinates us to be like Jesus that his dear Son might be the first of a new order of beings, elevated above all other creatures, and nearer to God than any other existences. He was Lord of angels, seraphim and cherubim obeyed his behests; but the Son desired to be at the head of a race of beings more nearly allied to him than any existing spirits. There was no kinship between the Lord Jesus and angels, for to which of the angels had the Father said at any time, "Thou art my Son"? They are by nature servants, and he is the Son, this is a wide distinction. The Eternal Son desired association with beings who should be sons as he was, towards whom he could stand in a close relationship as being like to them in nature and sonship, and the Father therefore ordained that a seed whom he has chosen should be conformed to the image of the Son, that his Son might head up and be chief among an order of beings more nearly akin to God than any other. The serpent said to Eve, "God doth know that ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." That lie had in it a residuum of truth, for by sovereign grace we have become such. There were no obedient creatures in the world of that sort, knowing good and evil, in the days of Eden's glory. The angels in heaven had known good, and only good, and preserved by grace had not fallen; the evil spirit had fallen, and he knew evil, but he had forgotten good, and was incapable of ever choosing it again; he is now for ever banished from hope of restoration. But here are we who know both good and evil; we undertand the one, and the other too, and now there is begotten in us a nature which loves holiness and cannot sin, because it is born of God; we are left free agents, yea, we are freer than

ever we were, and yet in this life, and in the life to come, our path is like that of the just which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Angels know not evil; they have never had to battle with evil known and felt within; they have not tried the paths of sinful pleasure, and through grace been turned from them, so as with full purpose of heart to cleave to holiness for ever. Jesus now heads a race assailed but victorious; sorely tempted but enabled to overcome. Joyfully and cheerfully for ever shall it be our delight to do the Father's will. For ever with Christ at our head we shall be the nearest to the eternal throne; the most attached of servants, because also sons; the most firmly adhesive to good, because we once knew the bitterness of evil. Even as Christ had to drink the cup of suffering for sin, we also have sipped of it. We have known horror caused by guilt, and, therefore, for the future shall be throughout eternity a nobler race, freer to serve, and serving God after a nobler fashion than any other creatures in the universe. I take it that it is the meaning of the text, that the Lord would have Christ to be the first of a nobler order of beings.

But, secondly, the object of grace is that there may be some in heaven with whom Christ can hold brotherly converse. Note the expression, "Many brethren"—not that he might be the firstborn among many, but among "many brethren," who should be like himself. Our blessed Lord delights in fellowship; such is the greatness of his heart that he would not be alone in his glory, but would have associates in his happiness. Now, I speak with bated breath. God can do all things, but I see not any way by which he could give to his only-begotten Son beings that should be akin to himself, except through the processes which we discover in the economy of grace. Here are beings that know evil, and know also good, beings placed under infinite obligations by bonds of love and gratitude to choose for ever the good, beings with a nature so renewed that they always must be holy beings; and these beings can commune with the incarnate God upon suffering as angels cannot, upon the penalty of guilt as angels cannot; upon heart-throes, conflicts, reproaches, and brokenness of spirit as angels cannot: and to them the Lord Jesus can reveal the glory of holiness, the bliss of conquering sin, and the sweetness of benevolence as only they can comprehend them. Renewed men are made fit companions for the Son of God. He shall feast all the more joyously because they shall eat bread with him in his kingdom. He shall be joyful when he declares the Lord's name unto his brethren. He shall joy in their joy, and be glad in their gladness.

No doubt, however, the text means that these will for ever love and honour the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The children look up to the firstborn. In the East the firstborn is the lord and king of the household. We love Jesus now, and esteem him our head and chief. How will we, when we once get to heaven, love and adore him as our dear elder brother with whom we shall be on terms of the closest familiarity and most reverent obedience. How joyfully will we serve him, how rapturously adore him. Shall we not want to have our voices made more loud till they become as thunders, or like many waters, or surely we shall not be able to praise him as we would? If there be work to do for him in future ages we will be the first to volunteer for service; if there be battles to be fought in times to come with other rebellious races, if

there be wanted servants to fly over the vast realms of the infinite to carry Jehovah's messages, who shall fly so swiftly as we shall, when once we feel that in his courts we shall dwell not as mere servants, but as members of the royal family, partakers of the divine nature, nearest to God himself. What bliss to know that he who is "very God of very God," and sits on the eternal throne, is also of the same nature with ourselves, our kinsman, who is not ashamed even amidst the royalties of glory to call us brethren. O brethren, what honours are ours! What a heritage lies before us! Who among us would change with Gabriel? We shall have no need to envy angels, for what are they but ministering spirits, servants in our Father's halls; but we are sons, and sons of no inferior order, no sons of a secondary rank like Abraham's children born of Keturah, or like the son of the bond-woman, but we are the Isaacs of God, born according to the promise, heirs of all that he hath, a seed beloved of the Lord for ever. Oh, what joy ought to fill our spirits this morning, at the prospect which this text reveals, and which predestination secures!

Perhaps our fullest thought upon the text is this. God was so well pleased with his Son, and saw such beauties in him, that he determined to multiply his image. "My beloved," said he, "thou shalt be the model by which I will fashion my noblest creature, I will for thy sake make men able to converse with thee, and bound to thee by bands of love, who shall be next akin to myself, and in all things like to thee." Behold from heaven's mint golden pieces of inestimable value are sent forth, and each one bears the image and superscription of the Son of God. The face of Jesus is more lovely to God than all the worlds, his eyes are brighter than the stars, his voice is sweeter than bliss; therefore doth the Father will to have his Son's beauty reflected in ten thousand mirrors in saints made like to him, and his praises chanted by myriads of voices of those who love him, because his blood has saved them. The Father knew how happy his Son would be to associate his chosen with himself, for of old his delights were with the sons of men. As a shepherd loves his sheep, as a king loves his subjects, so Jesus loves to have his people around him; but deeper yet is the mystery, as it is not good for a man to be alone, and as for this cause doth a man leave his father and mother and is joined unto his wife, and they twain are one flesh, even so is it with Christ and his church. He was made like to her for her salvation, and now she is made like to him for his honour. In what way could the Father put greater honour on his Son than by forming a race like to himself, who shall be the many brethren among whom he is the well-beloved firstborn?

Now, brethren, this word I say and send you home. Keep your model before you. You see what you are to come to, therefore, set Christ before your eyes always. You see what you are predestinated to be: aim at it, aim at it every day. God worketh, and he worketh in you not to sleep, but to will and to do according to his own good pleasure. Brethren, grieve at your failures; when you see anything in yourselves that is not Christlike mourn over it, for it must be put away, it is so much dross that must be consumed; you cannot keep it, for God's predestination will not let you retain anything about you which is not according to the image of Christ. Cry mightily to the Holy Spirit to

continue his sanctifying work upon you; beseech him not to be grieved and vexed, and, therefore, in any measure to stay his hand. Cry, "Lord, melt me, pour me out like wax, and set thy seal upon me until the image of Christ be clearly there." Above all, commune much with Christ. Communion is the fountain of conformity. Live with Christ and you will soon grow like Christ. They said of Achilles, the greatest of the Grecian heroes, that when he was a child they fed him upon lion's marrow, and so made him brave; feed upon Christ and be Christlike. They record on the other hand of blood-thirsty Nero, that he became so because he was suckled by a woman of a ferocious, barbaric nature. If we drink in our nutriment from the world, we shall be worldly; but, if we live upon Christ and dwell in him, our conformity with him shall be readily accomplished, and we shall be recognised as brethren of that blessed family of which Jesus Christ is the firstborn. How I wish every one here had a share in the text: I mourn that some have not, for he that believeth not on the Son hath not life, and therefore cannot have conformity to a living Christ. God grant to you all to be believers in Christ, now and for ever. Amen and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Romans viii. 16—39; 1 Corinthians xv. 39—58.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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LOOSING THE SHOE-LATCHET.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 31ST, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose."—Luke iii. 16.

IT was not John's business to attract followers to himself but to point them to Jesus, and he very faithfully discharged his commission. His opinion of his Master, of whom he was the herald, was a very high one; he reverenced him as the anointed of the Lord, the King of Israel, and, consequently, he was not tempted into elevating himself into a rival. He rejoiced to declare "he must increase but I must decrease." In the course of his self-depreciation, he uses the expression of our text, which is recorded by each one of the evangelists, with some little variation. Matthew words it, "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;" he was not fit to fetch his Lord his shoes. Mark writes it "whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose;" and John has it very much as in Luke. This putting on, and taking off and putting away of sandals, was an office usually left to menial servants, it was not a work of any repute or honour, yet the Baptist felt that it would be a great honour to be even a menial servant of the Lord Jesus. He felt that the Son of God was so infinitely superior to himself that he was honoured if only permitted to be the meanest slave in his employ. He would not allow men to attempt comparisons between himself and Jesus, he felt that none could, for a moment, be allowed. Now this honest estimate of himself as less than nothing in comparison with his Master is greatly to be imitated by us. John is to be commended and admired for this, but better still he is to be carefully copied.

Remember that John was by no means an inferior man. Among all that had been born of women before his time there had not been a greater than he. He was the subject of many prophecies, and his office was a peculiarly noble one; he was the friend of the great Bridegroom, and introduced him to his chosen bride. He was the morning star of the gospel day, but he counted himself no light in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness whom he heralded. The temperament of John was not that which bowed or cringed; he was no reed shaken

by the wind, no man of courtly habits fitted for king's palace. No. We see in him an Elias, a man of iron, a son of thunder; he roared like a young lion on his prey, and feared the face of none. Some men are so naturally meek spirited, not to say weak-minded, that they naturally become subservient and set up others as their leaders, such men are apt to err in depreciating themselves; but John was every inch a man, his great soul bowed only before that which was worthy of homage; he was in God's strength as an iron pillar and a brazen wall, a hero for the cause of the Lord, and yet he sat down in the presence of Jesus as a little child at school sits at his master's feet, and he cried "whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and to unloose."

Recollect, moreover, that John was a man endowed with great abilities, and these are very apt to make a man proud. He was a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet. When he stood in the wilderness to preach, his burning eloquence soon attracted the people from Jerusalem and from all the cities round about, and the banks of Jordan saw a vast multitude of eager hearers crowding around the man clothed with a garment of camel's hair. Thousands gathered together to listen to the teaching of one who had not been brought up at the feet of the rabbis, neither had been taught eloquence after the fashion of the schools. John was a man of bold, plain, telling, commanding speech; he was no second-rate teacher, but a master in Israel, yet he assumed no airs of self-conceit, but accounted the lowest place in the Lord's service as too high for him. Note, too, that he was not only a great preacher, but he had been very successful not only in attracting the crowds but in baptising them. The whole nation felt the effects of John's ministry, and knew that he was a prophet: they were swayed to and fro by his zealous words, as the corn of autumn is moved in the breath of the wind. A man is very apt when he feels that he has power over masses of his fellow creatures to be lifted up and exalted above measure, but not so John. It was safe for the Lord to trust him with a great popularity and a great success, for though he had all those honours he laid them meekly down at Jesus' feet, and said, "I am not worthy to be even the lowest slave in Messiah's household."

Reflect, also, moreover, that John was a religious leader, and he had the opportunity, if he had pleased, of becoming the leader of a powerful sect. The people were evidently willing to follow him. There were some, no doubt, who would not have gone over to Christ himself if John had not bidden them go, and testified, "Behold the Lamb of God," and confessed over and over again, saying, "I am not the Christ." We read of some who years after the Baptist was dead still remained his disciples, so that he had the opportunity of leading away a multitude who would have become his followers, and so of setting up his own name among men; but he scorned it, his elevated view of his master prevented his entertaining any desire for personal leadership, and putting himself down not in the place of a captain of the Lord's hosts, but as one of the least soldiers in the army, he saith, "His shoe latchets I am not worthy to unloose." What was the reason, think you, of John's always retaining his proper position? Was it not because he had a high idea of his Master, and a deep reverence for him? Ah, brethren, because of our little estimate of Christ, it is often unsafe for the Lord to trust us in

any but the very lowest positions. I believe many of us might have been ten times as useful, only it would not have been safe for God to have allowed us to be so; we should have been puffed up, and like Nebuchadnezzar we should have boasted, "Behold this great Babylon that I have builded." Many a man has had to fight in the back ranks, and serve his Master but little, and enjoy but little success in that service, because he did not reverence Christ enough, did not love his Lord enough, and, consequently, self would soon have crept in to his own overturning, to the grief of the church, and to the dishonour of his Lord. Oh, for high thoughts of Christ, and low thoughts of ourselves! Oh, to see Jesus as filling all in all, and to be ourselves as less than nothing before him.

Having thus introduced the subject, our object this morning is to draw instruction from the expression which John here and elsewhere used with regard to himself and his Lord: "Whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

I gather from this, first, that *no form of holy service is to be lightly set by:* secondly, that *our unworthiness is apparent in the presence of any sort of holy work:* but that, thirdly, *this unworthiness of ours, when most felt, should rather stimulate us to action than discourage us,* for so it doubtless operated in the case of John the Baptist.

I. First, then, note that NO FORM OF HOLY SERVICE IS TO BE LIGHTLY SET BY. To unloose the latchets of Christ's shoes might seem very trivial; it might even seem as if it involved the loss of self-respect for a man of position and influence to stoop to offices which a servant might quite as well perform. Why should I bring myself down to that? I will learn of Christ; I will distribute bread among the multitude for Christ; I will have my boat by the sea shore ready for Christ to preach in, or I will go and fetch the ass upon which he shall ride in triumph into Jerusalem: but what need can there be for the disciple to become a mere menial? Such a question as that is here for ever silenced, and the spirit which dictates it is practically rebuked. Nothing is dishonourable by which Jesus may be honoured. Nothing lowers a man if thereby he honours his Lord. It is not possible for any godly work to be beneath our dignity; rather ought we to know that the lowest grade of service bestows dignity upon the man who heartily performs it. Even the least and most obscure form of serving Christ is more high and lofty than we are worthy to undertake.

Now, note that little works for Christ, little shoe bearings and latchet loosings, often *have more of the child's spirit in them than greater works.* Outside, in the streets, a man's companion will do him a kindness, and the action performed is friendly; but for filial acts you must look inside the house. There the child does not lend money to its father, or negociate business, yet in his little acts there is more sonship. Who is it that comes to meet father when the day is over? and what is the action which often indicates childhood's love? See the little child comes tottering forward with father's slippers, and runs off with his boots as he puts them off. The service is little, but it is loving and filial, and has more of filial affection in it than the servant's bringing in the meal, of preparing the bed, or any other more essential service. It gives the little one great pleasure, and expresses his love. No one who is not

my child, or who does not love me in something like the same way, would ever dream of making such a service his speciality. The littleness of the act fits it to the child's capacity, and there is also something in it which makes it a suitable expression of a child's affection. So also in little acts for Jesus. Oftentimes men of the world will give their money to the cause of Christ, putting down large sums for charity or for missions, but they will not weep in secret over other men's sins, or speak a word of comfort to an afflicted saint. To visit a poor sick woman, teach a little child, reclaim a street Arab, breathe a prayer for enemies, or whisper a promise in the ear of a desponding saint, may show more of sonship than building a row of almshouses or endowing a church.

In little acts for Christ it is always to be remembered that the *little things are as necessary to be done as the greater acts.* If Christ's feet be not washed, if his sandals be not unloosed he may suffer, and his feet may be lamed, so that a journey may be shortened, and many villages may miss the blessing of his presence. So with other minor things. There is as much need for the quiet intercessions of saints as for the public delivery of God's truth before the assembled thousands. It is as needful that babes be taught their little hymns as that monarchs be rebuked for sin. We remember the old story of the losing of the battle through the missing of a single nail in a horse-shoe, and peradventure up to this moment the church may have lost her battle for Christ, because some minor work which ought to have been done for Jesus has been neglected. I should not wonder if it should turn out that many churches have been without prosperity because, while they have looked to the public ministry and the visible ordinances, they have been negligent of smaller usefulnesses. Many a cart comes to grief through inattention to the linchpin. A very small matter turns an arrow aside from the target. To teach a child to sing "Gentle Jesus," and to point its young heart to the Redeemer, may seem a trifle, but yet it may be a most essential part of the process of that gracious work of religious education by which that child shall afterwards become a believer, a minister, and a winner of souls. Omit that first lesson and it may be you have turned aside a life. Take another instance. A preacher once found himself advertised to preach in an obscure village, the storm was terrible, and, therefore, though he kept his appointment, he found only one person present in the place of meeting. He preached a sermon to that one hearer with as much earnestness as if the house had been crowded. Years after he found churches all over the district, and he discovered that his audience of one had been converted on that day, and had become the evangelist of the whole region. Had he declined to preach to one, what blessings might have been withheld. Brethren, never neglect the loosing of the shoe-latchet for Christ, since you do not know what may hang upon it. Human destiny often turns upon a hinge so small as to be invisible. Never say within yourself, "This is trivial"—nothing is trivial for the Lord. Never say, "But this surely might be omitted without much loss." How knowest thou? If it be thy duty, he who allotted thee thy task knew what he did. Do not thou in any measure neglect any portion of his orders, for in all his commands there is consummate wisdom, and on thy part it will be wisdom to obey them, even to the jots and tittles.

Little things for Christ again are *often the best tests of the truth of our religion*. Obedience in little things has much to do with the character of a servant. You engage a servant in your own house, and you know very well whether she be a good or bad servant that the main duties of the day are pretty sure to be attended to; the meals will be cooked, the beds will be prepared, the house will be swept, the door will be answered; but the difference between a servant who makes the house happy and another who is its plague, lies in a number of small matters, which, peradventure, you could not put down on paper, but which make up a very great deal of domestic comfort or discomfort, and so determine the value of a servant. So I believe it is in Christian life; I do not suppose that the most of us here would ever omit the weightier matters of the law; as Christian men we endeavour to maintain integrity and uprightness in our actions, and we try to order our households in the fear of God in great matters; but it is in the looking to the Lord upon minor details that the spirit of obedience is most displayed; it is seen in our keeping our eye up to the Lord, as the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistresses for daily orders about this step and that transaction. The really obedient spirit wishes to know the Lord's will about everything, and if there be any point which to the world seem trifling, for that very reason the obedient spirit says, "I will attend to it to prove to my Lord that even in the minutiæ I desire to submit my soul to his good pleasure." In small things lie the crucibles and the touchstones. Any hypocrite will come to the Sabbath worship, but it is not every hypocrite that will attend prayer-meetings, or read the Bible in secret, or speak privately of the things of God to the saints. These are less things, so they judge, and therefore they neglect them, and so condemn themselves. Where there is deep religion prayer is loved: where religion is shallow only public acts of worship are cared for. You shall find the same true in other things. A man who is no Christian will very likely not tell you a downright lie by saying that black is white, but he will not hesitate to declare that whitybrown is white—he will go that length. Now, the Christian will not go halfway to falsehood, nay, he scorns to go an inch on that road. He will no more cheat you out of twopence farthing, than he would out of two thousand pounds. He will not rob you of an inch any more than of an ell. It is in the little that the genuineness of the Christian is made to appear; the Goldsmiths' Hall mark is a small affair, but you know true silver by it. There is a vast deal of difference between the man who gladly bears Christ's shoes, and another who will not stoop to anything which he thinks beneath him. Even a Pharisee will ask Christ to his house to sit at meat with him, he is willing to entertain a great religious leader at his table; but it is not everyone who will stoop down and unloose his shoes, for that very Pharisee who made the feast neither brought him water to wash his feet, nor gave him the kiss of welcome; he proved the insincerity of his hospitality by forgetting the little things. I will be bound to say Martha and Mary never forgot to unloose his shoe-latchets, and that Lazarus never failed to see that his feet were washed. Look then, I pray you, as Christians to the service of Christ in the obscure things, in the things that are not recognised by men, in the matters which have no honour attached to them, for by this shall your love be tried.

Mark, also, with regard to little works that very often *there is about them a degree of personal fellowship with Christ which is not seen in greater work.* For instance, in the one before us, to unloose the latchets of his shoes brings me into contact with himself, though it be only his feet I touch; and I think if I might have the preference between going forth to cast out devils and to preach the gospel and to heal the sick, or to stay with him and always loose the latchets of his shoes, I should prefer this last; because the first act Judas did—he went with the twelve and saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven, but he perished because he failed in the acts that came into contact with Christ,—in keeping Christ's purse he was a thief, and in giving Christ the kiss he was a traitor. He who does not fail in things relating personally to Christ is the sound man, he has the evidence of righteousness of heart. There was never a grander action done beneath the stars than when the woman broke her alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it upon him; though the poor did not get anything out of it, though no sick man was the better for it, the act was done distinctly unto him, and therefore there was a peculiar sweetness in it. Oftentimes similar actions, because they do not encourage other people for they do not know of them, because they may not be of any very great value to our fellow men, are lightly esteemed, yet seeing they are done for Christ, they have about them a peculiar charm as terminating upon his blessed person. True, it is but the loosing of shoe-latchets, but then, they are *his* shoes, and that ennobles the deed.

Dear fellow Christians, you know what I mean, though I cannot put it into very good language this morning—I mean just this, that if there is some little thing I can do for Christ, though my minister will not know about it, though the deacons and elders will not know, and nobody will know, and if I leave it undone nobody will suffer any calamity because of it; but, if I do it, it will please my Lord, and I shall enjoy the sense of having done it to him, therefore will I attend to it, for it is no slight work if it be *for him.*

Mark, also, once more, concerning those gracious actions which are but little esteemed by the most of mankind, that we know *God accepts our worship in little things.* He allowed his people to bring their bullocks, others of them to bring their rams, and offer them to him; and these were persons of sufficient wealth to be able to afford a tribute from their herds and flocks, but he also permitted the poor to offer a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons, and I have never found in God's word that he cared less for the turtle dove offering than he did for the sacrifice of the bullock. I do know, too, that our ever blessed Lord himself, when he was here, loved the praise of little children. They brought neither gold nor silver like the wise men from the East, but they cried "Hosanna," and the Lord was not angry with their Hosannas, but accepted their boyish praise. And we remember that a widow woman cast into the treasury two mites, which only made a farthing, but, because it was all her living, he did not reject the gift, but rather recorded it to her honour. We are now quite familiar with the incident, but for all that it is very wonderful. Two mites that make a farthing given to the infinite God! A farthing accepted by the King of kings! A farthing acknowledged by him who made the heavens and the earth, who saith,

"If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the cattle on a thousand hills are mine." Two mites received with pleasure by the Lord of all! It was scarcely so much as a drop thrown into the sea, and yet *he* thought much of it. Measure, therefore, not little actions by human scales and measures, but estimate them as God does, for the Lord hath respect unto the hearts of his people; he regardeth not so much their deeds in themselves as the motives by which they are actuated. Therefore, value the loosing of the Saviour's shoe-latchets, and despise not the day of small things.

II. Now, brethren and sisters, I wish to conduct you, in the second place, to the consideration of OUR OWN UNWORTHINESS, which is sure to be felt by us whenever we come practically into contact with any real Christian service. I believe that a man who does nothing at all thinks himself a fine fellow, as a general rule. You shall usually find that the sharpest critics are those who never write; and the best judges of battles those who keep at a prudent distance from the guns. Christians of the kid-gloved order, who never make an attempt to save souls, are marvellously quick to tell us when we are too rough or too light in our speech; and they readily detect us if our modes of action are irregular or too enthusiastic. They have a very keen scent for anything like fanaticism or disorder. For my part, I feel pretty safe when I have the censures of these gentlemen; we are not far wrong when they condemn us. Let a man begin earnestly to work for the Lord Jesus, and he will soon find out that he is unworthy of the meanest place in the employ of one so glorious. Let us turn over that fact a minute. Dear brothers and sisters, when we *recollect what we used to be* I am sure we must feel unworthy to do the very least thing for Christ. You know how Paul describes the wickedness of certain offenders, and he adds, "But such were some of you." What hardness of heart some of us exhibited towards God! what rebellion! what obstinacy! what quenching of his Spirit! what love of sin! Why, if I might stoop down to unloose the latchet of the shoe of that foot which was crucified for me, I must bedew the nail print with my tears, and say, "My Saviour, can it be that I am ever allowed to touch thy feet?" Surely, the prodigal, if he ever unloosed his father's shoes, would say to himself, "Why, these hands fed the swine, these hands were often polluted by the harlots, I lived in uncleanness, and was first a reveller, and then a swineherd, and it is amazing love which permits me now to serve so good a father." Angels in heaven might envy the man who is permitted to do the least thing for Christ, and yet they never sinned. Oh, what a favour that we who are defiled with sin should be called to serve the sinless Saviour.

But, then, another reflection comes at the back of it—we *recollect what we are* as well as what we were—I say, what we are, for though washed in Jesus' blood, and endowed with a new heart and a right spirit, yet we start aside like a deceitful bow, for corruption dwells in us. It is sometimes hard work to maintain even a little faith, we are so double-minded, so unstable, so hot, so cold, so earnest, and then so negligent: we are so everything except what we ought to be, that we may well wonder that Christ allows us to do the least thing for him. If he were to shut us in prison and keep us there, so long as he did not actually execute us he would be dealing with us according to mercy, and not giving us our full

deserts; and yet he calls us out of prison, and puts us in his service, and therefore we feel that we are unworthy to perform the least action in his house.

Besides, beloved, even *small services we feel require a better state of heart than we often have.* I am sure the service of preaching the gospel here often brings to my sight my unworthiness far more than I should otherwise see it. If it be a gracious thing to see one's sinfulness, I may thank God I preach the gospel, for it makes me see it. Sometimes we come to preach about Jesus Christ and glorify him, and yet our heart is not warm towards him, and we do not value him aright; while the text we are preaching from seats him on a high throne, our heart is not setting him there; and oh, then we think we could tear our heart out of our very body, if we could get rid of the black drops of its depravity which prevent our feeling in unison with the glorious truth before us. Another time, perhaps, we have to invite sinners and seek to bring them to Christ, and that wants so much sympathy that if Christ were preaching our sermon he would bedew it with his tears; but, we deliver it with dry eyes, almost without emotion, and then we flog our hard heart that it will not stir and cannot be made to feel. It is just the same in other duties. Have you not felt "I have to go and teach my class, this afternoon, but I am not fit, I have been worried all the week with cares, and my mind is not up to the mark now; I hope I love my Lord, but I hardly know whether I do or not. I ought to be earnest about these boys and girls: but it is very likely I shall not be earnest, I shall sit down and go through my teaching as a parrot would go through it, without life, without love." Yes, then you painfully feel that you are not worthy to unloose the latchets of your Lord's shoes. Possibly, you are going this afternoon to visit a dying man, and you will try and talk to him about the way to heaven. He is unconverted. Now, you want a tongue of fire to speak with, and instead of that, you have a tongue of ice: you feel, "O God, how can it be that I shall sit by that bedside and think of that poor man, who will be in the flames of hell, perhaps, within a week, unless he receive Christ, and yet I shall cooly treat his tremendously perilous condition as though it were a matter of the very slightest consequence." Yes, yes, yes, we have had hundred of times to feel that we are in and of ourselves not fit for anything. If the Lord wanted scullions in his kitchen, he could get better than we are; and if he needed some one to shovel out the refuse of his house, he could find better men than we are for that. To such a Master we are unworthy to be servants.

The same feeling arises in another way. Have we not to confess, brethren and sisters, in looking upon what we have done for Christ, that *we have far too much eye to self in our conduct.* We pick and choose our work, and the picking and choosing is guided by the instinct of self-respect. If we are asked to do that which is pleasant to ourselves we do it. If we are requested to attend a meeting where we shall be received with acclamation, if we are asked to perform a service which will lift us up in the social scale, or that will commend us to our fellow Christians, we jump at it like a fish at a fly; but, suppose the work would bring us shame, suppose it would discover to the public rather our inefficiency than our ability, we excuse ourselves.

The spirit which Moses felt a little of, when the Lord called him, is upon many of us. "If I were to speak for Christ," saith one, "I should stutter and stammer." As if God did not make stuttering mouths as well as fluent mouths; and as if, when he chose a Moses, he did not know what he was at. Moses must go and stammer for God, and glorify God by stammering, but Moses does not like that; and many in similar cases have not had grace enough to go to the work at all. Why, if I cannot honour the Lord with ten talents, shall I refuse to serve him with one? If I cannot fly like a strong-winged angel through the midst of heaven, and sound the shrill-mouthed trumpet so as to wake the dead, shall I refuse to be a little bee and gather honey at God's bidding? Because I cannot be a leviathan, shall I refuse to be an ant? What folly and what rebellion if we are so perverse.

And, if you have performed any holy work, have you not noticed that pride is ready to rise? God can hardly let us succeed in any work but what we become toplofty. "Oh, how well we have done it!" We do not want anybody to say, "Now, that was very cleverly, and nicely, and carefully, and earnestly done," for we say all that to ourselves, and we add, "yes, you were zealous about that work, and you have been doing what a great many would not have done, and you have not boasted of it either. You do not call in any neighbour to see it, you have been doing it simply out of love to God, and, therefore, you are an uncommonly humble fellow, and none can say you are vain." Alas! what flattery, but truly "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We are not worthy to unloose the latchets of Jesus' shoes, because, if we do, we begin to say to ourselves, "What great folks are we; we have been allowed to loose the latchets of the Lord's sandals." If we do not tell somebody else about it with many an exultation, we at least tell ourselves about it, and feel that we are something after all, and ought to be held in no small repute.

My brethren, we ought to feel that we are not worthy to do the lowest thing we can do for Christ, because, *when we have gone to the lowest, Jesus always goes lower down than we have gone.* Is it a little thing to bear his shoes? What, then, was his condescension when he washed his disciples' feet? To put up with a cross-tempered brother, to be gentle with him, and feel, "I will give way to him in everything because I am a Christian," that is going very low; but then, our Lord has borne far more from us; he was patient with his people's infirmities, and forgave even to seventy times seven. And, suppose we are willing to take the lowest place in the church, yet Jesus took a lower place than we can, for he took the place of the curse,—he was made sin for us, even he that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. I have sometimes felt willing to go to the gates of hell to save a soul; but the Redeemer went further, for he suffered the wrath of God for souls. If there should be any Christian here who is so humble that he has no lofty thoughts about himself, but prefers to be least amongst his brethren, and so proves his graciousness, yet, my dear brother, you are not so lowly as Christ made himself, for he "made himself of no reputation," and you have some reputation left; and he took upon himself the form of a servant, and he became obedient to death,—you have not come to that yet; even the death of

the cross,—the felon's death upon the gibbet, you will never be brought to that. Oh, the stoop of the Redeemer's amazing love! Let us, henceforth, contend how low we can go side by side with him, but remember when we have gone to the lowest he descends lower still, so that we can truly feel that the very lowest place is too high for us, because he has gone lower still.

Beloved friends, to put these things in a practical shape, it may seem to be a very small duty for any of you to do, to speak to one person alone about his soul. If you were asked to preach to a hundred you would try it. I ask you solemnly, in God's name, not to let the sun go down to-day till you have spoken to one man or woman alone about his or her soul. Will you not do that? Is it too little for you? Then I must be plain with you, and say you are not worthy to do it. Speak to-day to some little child about his soul. Do not say, "Oh, we cannot talk to children, we cannot stoop to them." Let no such feeling occupy any of our minds, for if this work be as the loosing of the Master's shoe-latchets, let us do it. Holy Brainerd, when he was dying, and could no longer preach to the Indians, had a little Indian boy at his bedside, and taught him his letters; and he remarked to one who came in, "I asked God that I might not live any longer than I could be of use, and so, as I cannot preach any more, I am teaching this poor little child to read the Bible." Let us never think that we are stooping when we teach children, but if it be stooping let us stoop.

There are some of you, perhaps, who have the opportunity to do good to fallen women. Do you shrink from such work? Many do. They feel as if they could do anything rather than speak to such. Is it the loosing of the latchet of your Master's shoe? It is, then, an honourable business; try it, brother. It is not beneath you if you do it for Jesus; it is even above the best of you, you are not worthy to do it. Possibly there is near your house a district of very poor people. You do not like going in among them. They are dirty, and perhaps infected with disease. Well, it is a pity that poor people should so often be dirty, but pride is dirty too. Do you say, "I cannot go there." Why not? Are you such a mighty fine gentleman that you are afraid of soiling your hands? You will not unloose your Master's shoe-latchet then. The Lord lived among the poor, and was poorer even than they; for he had not where to lay his head. Oh, shame on you, you wicked and proud servant of a condescending, loving Lord! Go about your business, and unloose the latchets of his shoes directly! Instead of imagining that you would be lowered by such work for Jesus, I tell you it would honour you; indeed, you are not fit for it, the honour is too great for you, and will fall to the lot of better men.

It comes to this, beloved, anything that can be done for Christ is too good for us to do. Somebody wanted to keep the door! Somebody wanted to rout out the back lanes! Somebody wanted to teach ragged roughs! Somebody wanted to ask people to come to the place of worship, and to lend them their seats, and stand in the aisle while they sit. Well, be it what it may, I had rather be a door keeper in the house of the Lord, or the door mat either, than I would be accounted amongst the noblest in the tents of wickedness. Anything for Jesus, the lower the better; anything for Jesus, the humbler the better;

anything for Jesus. The more going down into the deeps, the more thrusting the arms up to the elbows in the mud to find out precious jewels, the more of that the better. This is the true spirit of the Christian religion. Not the soaring up there to sit among the choristers, and sing in grand style; not the putting on of apparel, and preaching in lawn sleeves; not the going through gaudy and imposing ceremonies,—all that is of Babylon: but to strip yourself to the shirt sleeves to fight the battle for Christ, and to go out among men as a humble worker, resolved by any means to save some, this is what your Lord would have you to do, for this is the unloosing of the latchets of his shoes.

III. And, now, our last remark shall be that ALL THIS OUGHT TO STIMULATE US AND NOT DISCOURAGE US. Though we are not worthy to do it, that is the reason why we should avail ourselves of the condescending grace which honours us with such employ. Do not say, "I am not worthy to unloose the latchets of his shoes, and, therefore, I shall give up preaching." Oh no, but preach away with all the greater vigour. John did so, and to his preaching he added warning. Warn people as well as preach to them. Tell them of the judgment to come, and separate between the precious and the vile. We should perform our work in all ways, not omitting the more painful part of it, but going through with whatever God has appointed to us. John was called to testify of Christ, he felt unworthy to do it, but he did not shirk the work. It was his life-long business to cry, "Behold, behold, behold the Lamb of God!" and he did it earnestly; he never paused in that cry. He was busy in baptising too. It was the initiatory rite of the new dispensation, and there he stood continually immersing those who believed. Never a more indefatigable worker than John the Baptist; he threw his whole soul into it, because he felt he was not worthy to do the work. Brethren and sisters, your sense of unworthiness will, if you be idle, sadly hamper you; but if the love of God be in your soul you will feel, "Since I do so badly when I do my best, I will always do my utmost. Since it comes to so little when the most is done, I will at least do the most." Could I give all my substance to him, and give my life, and then give my body to be burned, it would be a small return for love so amazing, so divine, as that which I have tasted: therefore, if I cannot do all that, at any rate, I will give the Lord Jesus all I can, I will love him all I can, I will pray to him all I can, I will talk about him all I can, and I will spread his gospel all I can; and no little thing will I count beneath me if his cause require it.

Brethren, John lived hard, for his meat was locusts and wild honey; his dress was not the soft raiment of men who live in palaces, he wrapped about him the rough camel's skin; and as he lived hard he died hard too, his boldness brought him into a dungeon, his courageous fidelity earned him a martyr's death. Here was a man who lived in self-denial and died witnessing for truth and righteousness, and all this because he had a high esteem of his Master. May our esteem of Christ so grow and increase, that we may be willing to put up with anything in life for Christ, and even to lay down our lives for his name's sake!

Certain Moravian missionaries, in the old times of slavery, went to one of the West Indian Islands to preach, and they found they could not be

permitted to teach there unless they themselves became slaves; and they did so, they sold themselves into bondage, never to return, that they might save slaves' souls. We have heard of another pair of holy men who actually submitted to be confined in a lazar-house, that they might save the souls of lepers, knowing as they did that they would never be permitted to come out again; they went there to take the leprosy and to die, if by so doing they might save souls. I have read of one, Thomé de Jesu, who went to Barbary amongst the Christian captives, and there lived and died in banishment and bondage, that he might cheer his brethren, and preach Jesus to them. Brethren, we have never reached to such devotion; we fall far short of what Jesus deserves. We give him little, we give him what we are ashamed not to give him. Often we give him our zeal for a day or two and then grow cool, we wake up on a sudden and then sleep all the more soundly. We seem to-day as if we would set the world on fire, and to-morrow we scarce keep our own lamp trimmed. We vow at one time that we will push the church before us and drag the world after us, and by-and-by we ourselves are like Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels taken off, and drag along right heavily. Oh, for a spark of the love of Christ in the soul! Oh, for a living flame from off Calvary's altar, to set our whole nature blazing with divine enthusiasm for the Christ who gave himself for us that we might live! Henceforth, take upon yourselves in the solemn intent of your soul this deep resolve: "I will unloose the latchets of his shoes, I will seek out the little things, the mean things, the humble things, and I will do them as unto the Lord and not unto men, and may he accept me even as he has saved me through his precious blood." Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Psalm viii.; Luke iii. 1—22.

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THE NATIONAL RELIGION.

By C. H. SPURGEON.

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JOY IN A RECONCILED GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 7TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."—Romans v. 11.

OUR text begins with these words, "And not only so." It is the second time in which they occur in the chapter, I might almost have said the third, for a similar expression is used in another verse. The apostle had been mentioning very great and amazing privileges; he had gone from great benefits to yet greater; he had advanced, I might say, from silver to gold, and from gold to the priceless crystal; and when he had reached the highest point that we could have thought to be conceivable, he adds, "And not only so." There is always in Christian privilege a yet beyond. The ancient mariners spoke of the pillars of Hercules and the Ultima Thule, and they supposed that when once their sails had whitened the sea in that direction they had come to the end of the universe and could go no further; but, more venturous prows forced their way to a new world, and proved that the former boundaries were imaginary. Even so we may have concluded in the early days of our Christian experience that we never could be happier, that we never could enjoy greater privileges, that there could not be greater treasures than we had discovered; but even at this present we have pushed far beyond our young attainments, and are preparing for yet more far-reaching endeavours. We have not yet attained. Far be it from us to imagine that we are or have all that the Lord intends. Let us not sit down contented with the notion that the gospel contains no more, for rest assured, to him who is able to follow after it there are whole worlds of privilege yet to be discovered. We are only at the foot of the mountain as yet. We may take for our motto the words, "Higher, higher, higher," and may soar aloft again and again on eagles' wings, for heaven is higher than our loftiest flight. At the end of all we have known and experienced there may be written, "And not only so." A nobler future allures us, a higher line of spiritual things invites us; let us by faith and patience press forward to it. The borders of Immanuel's land have yielded us choice fruit, but the inner

valleys are rich with Eshcol clusters, and the brooks in the heart of the country overflow with milk and honey.

The present passage indicates a high attainment in spiritual life, when the soul learns not only to rejoice in salvation—which is an early experience, or to rejoice in tribulation—which is a far riper fruit, but advances even beyond that, and learns to make her joy, her glory, and her boast in God, in God alone. "And not only so, but we joy in God." There is the point of elevated experience of which the apostle speaks with such confident familiarity. It certainly touches the confines of heaven, if it be not altogether heaven. This is the joy of angels and of spirits purified from all stain; they joy in God. Yet this is an attainment possible to us here. I might confine my thoughts to that subject, but it might be for profit if I use the text in another way, embracing that thought and making it the main topic of discourse, but taking a somewhat wider range. My text seems to me to describe the progress of a soul towards God. There is the first step visible in it, though somewhat in shadow and rather implied than expressed. The second step is very clear; it is "receiving the atonement," or more correctly "the reconciliation." The third step shines in a yet brighter light; having received the reconciliation, "we joy in God" and so we complete our fellowship with him, and ascend to an elevation which, if it be not in heaven, lies on the confines of it.

I. Our text shadows out, by implication at any rate, THE FIRST STEP OF A SOUL IN COMING TO GOD. It lies here. We begin to be conscious that God is angry with us. The text declares that we have received the reconciliation; there was, therefore, a time when we had not received it, and before we could receive it we were made sensible that we needed it; and before we could be conscious of that need we were led to see that from necessity of his nature God must be angry with such sinful creatures as we were. It is the dawn of grace in the soul when the heart perceives that there is a holy God, and that such a God cannot be on terms of amity with an unholy thing like itself. God is not angry with men arbitrarily because he chooses to take a dislike to them. Oh, no. God is necessarily angry with evil, because he is holy, and pure, and good. A being who has no anger against evil has no love towards goodness. This is one mark of righteousness, that it of necessity takes fire, and burns with indignation against unrighteousness. Now, I may preach this truth to this present congregation, but many when they hear my words will carelessly enquire, "Well, and what concern is that of ours? What mattereth it?" But, if God's grace has begun a work in any heart, that soul will say, "Alas, alas, how true it is! How could the great Lawgiver in the heavens suffer me to break his laws with impunity? How could he be God and yet smile on sin? How could he be worthy of the seraphic song, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth,' and yet look with complacency upon one so unholy, so depraved, so unrighteous as I am by nature?" The awakened soul perceives that, unless God could cease to be God, he could not look with complacency upon sin, nor upon the sinner either, so long as sin lies upon him. This is a discovery which is very painful, but very simple. One would think that every man ought to see this fact, but no man does see it till the Spirit of God convinces him of sin,

of righteousness, and of judgment; and even then the natural heart endeavours to shut its eyes to it. That God is angry with us for sin is so unpleasant a thought, that the convinced sinner would, if he could, escape from it. He would willingly take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, that he might escape from his dread of divine wrath for sin; but there is no land of peace for such a soul. A guilty conscience will follow a man like his shadow; it will dog his footsteps, it will embitter his food, it will disturb his sleep, it will molest his waking hours; neither will he be content till by some better method than forgetting it, he shall have escaped from its force. The avenger of blood never ceases to pursue the manslayer till he has gained the city of refuge. That God is justly and of necessity angry with him as a sinner is a thought which haunts every convinced person. If I believed that God was angry with me simply out of arbitrary whim, and that he might not be angry with me if he chose, my heart would harden itself like steel in enmity against him; but, when it comes home to me that he is rightly angry with me, that if I were God I should be angry with such a one as I am, that if I could be perfectly holy as God is I should be equally indignant as God is with sin; then my soul feels the sting of wrath, its justice cuts my conscience to the quick, and makes my heart to bleed. It is a blessed thing when the heart is thus aroused from its fatal slumber, for then there is hope that it will seek out the divinely appointed way of escape from sin.

A second degree of this same step is a consciousness that we also are ourselves at enmity with God. We will not believe that our heart is opposed to God, though the preacher often warns us that it is so, and though the Word of God teaches the same. We will not be brought to admit that our heart is at war with the Lord. "Why," says one, "I pay respect to God, and go to a place of worship, and therefore I am not at enmity with him." Only when the Spirit of God comes do we discover that there is in our heart, latent to a great extent, but also very readily developed, an enmity against the living God. Then a man starts, and is astonished at himself. He asks, "Why is it that thoughts of God are unpleasant to me? Why is his day so long, his worship so wearisome, and his book so dull to me? It must be because I do not love the Lord." In very deed, if a proclamation were made that God had ceased to be, or was no longer holy and just, there are many who would count it the best of news. Alas, man would gladly make an end of his Maker! The awakened heart enquires, "Is it really so, that I am a *deicide*, and would, if I could, blot God out of existence, and have no God, because then I should be at peace? Is it indeed so?" When the Spirit of God makes the man confess that it is so, then he is amazed indeed, for he did not before know how far he had fallen. Now I am certain that if I could assure you upon solid grounds that there was no God, and consequently no need of repentance, and no fear of punishment, and consequently no need of pardon through the blood of Christ, it would make many of my hearers feel much relief and give them great ease of mind. Even very respectable and moral people would say, "Now we have got out of that difficulty about the new birth, atonement, and heaven, and hell in a very short and easy manner, and upon the whole we are glad about it." But, to some of us, such information

would be the most awful tidings possible, for the very fact that there is a God who is a righteous governor, and that there is a way of righteous pardon through the precious blood, is our joy and our gladness, now that we are reconciled to God. While you are not reconciled there is an enmity within you which the deceitfulness of your heart will not let you see, and when you are brought to see it and to sorrow for it, it will be one of the steps by which God will lead you to himself. We want you, dear unconverted hearers, to see clearly that there is a quarrel between God and you: on God's side a righteous disagreement with you, because he could not agree with you and be holy; and, on your side an unrighteous and wicked opposition to him, because his thoughts, and ways, and laws are too pure, too just, and too good for you.

A further portion of this same step (and I pray every hearer who is seeking God to see whether he knows anything about it) is the perception that, in order to perfect reconciliation with God, there must be something done Godward, and there must be something done manward; that is to say, something offered to God by which the insult and injury done to his most holy and righteous law shall be recompensed; and, next, a thorough change in us before we can walk with God in perfect communion; for if God were to forgive sins outright and make no more ado, and if he were to receive us into heaven itself, yet, as long as our nature is what it is, we should carry a hell within our own souls, and heaven would be to us misery emphasised. While we are unrenewed and our nature remains contrary to God, the nearer we could get to God, if that were possible, and the more of God's love we could perceive, if that were possible, the more intensely wretched we should become. In order to reconciliation it is not enough that one party should be forgiving, the other must yield too. If the aggrieved party on his part should go all the way towards reconciliation, it may only encourage the other to further evil, unless he desires reconciliation too; so you perceive that in order to reconciliation between a sinner and God, the sinner must be brought into a different state of heart, he must in fact repent, or, more fully, he must be born again.

One other part of this first step I must mention,—a soul upon whom the Spirit of God is thus operating begins to desire to be reconciled to God. "O God," saith he, "thou art angry with me; can thine anger be turned away? Is there a sacrifice? Is there an atonement? If there be, I beseech thee turn thy face of kindness towards me and have pity upon me. And, O Lord, whereas I know that in my bosom there is an evil heart which departs from thee, I beseech thee renew me. It is true the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots; but surely thou who madest me at the first canst new make me? O my great creator, couldst thou not be my renewer? Couldst thou not quench in me the fire of enmity against thyself, and make me yet to be thy friend? And, whereas, these two things stand in the way, thine anger and my enmity, canst thou not make a clean sweep of both? At one stroke canst thou not both justify me and regenerate me, so that I may walk with thee and be agreed with thee?" This is the dawn of grace, and a blessed dawn it is. How thankful am I if these words are reaching the ears of men who are undergoing this sacred process. Of old,

when the world was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and it is written, "There was light," and the next effect was order, and the next was life, and then a fair world arose beneath the brooding wings of the ever blessed Dove. Oh, may he come forth now in like manner; may he bring light into your souls, though this should cause you painfully to perceive the disorder of your nature, and may he then turn your chaos into order, your death into life, and your deformity into the beauty of holiness, to the praise of the glory of his grace. This is but the first step, but it is one for which to be devoutly grateful if the Holy Spirit has led us to take it.

II. Secondly, the text sets forth before us in the far clearer light of actual statement A SECOND STEP. "We have now received the at-one-ment." The word "atonement" is a very improper translation here. It is the only case in which our translators have used the word at all in the New Testament, and it is very unfortunate that they should have used it in the wrong place, because the word is as plainly as possible reconciliation, and does not so much refer to the atonement by which the reconciliation is made as to the reconciliation itself. I believe that here our excellent translators used the word in the sense of at-one-ment, or bringing two together. We have "received" an at-one-ment; we are made to come into oneness with God through Jesus Christ. Now, the second step Godward, and the truly vital one, *is receiving the reconciliation.*

Observe, how we are reconciled. It is not by working out a reconciliation. Please observe that. The first instinct of a man who finds himself with an angry God gazing upon him, and with enmity in his own heart towards God, is to set to work to try and better this state of things. "What shall I do? How shall I avert the divine anger?" The heart suggests a multitude of expedients. Sometimes it runs into the enchantment and fascination of ceremonialism, but more commonly among us it falls back upon its own natural self-righteousness, and dreams of reconciliation by amendment, and by future carefulness, and by a diligent obedience in the future, which it hopes to be able to render. Now, observe, the text does not say that we have made any atonement for sin, neither does any Scripture ever tell us that we can do so, or that by any good deeds of our own we are to be reconciled to God. I tell you, awakened souls, that all your struggles to be reconciled to God apart from Christ are only another form of the rebellion of your hearts against God; you are evidently opposed to him because you reject his plan of reconciliation, and in defiance of his will make a pretence of offering to be reconciled on other terms than those which he ordains. While talking of peace you insult the Lord again by rejecting the blood of his Son, which is the only atonement. From the top of Sinai, amidst the smoke and burnings of his awful presence, he forbids you to draw nigh, and he sets bounds about the mount; but your daring reply is, "By this mount I will approach to God, I will break the barriers, and climb Sinai's rocky sides." Your attempt is vain, the fire of his law will devour you; for this is not the way, neither is this the road by which God can permit a sinful soul to approach him, since if he did accept a sinner in his own righteousness it would be an insult to the righteousness of Christ; if he should admit a sinner into his favour by any door

but faith in his dear bleeding Son, it would be to make a liar of himself, to make void all his promises, and to do despite to the cross of Jesus. No, we *receive* the reconciliation, there is the pith of the matter. We do not make it, we receive it. I would like to dwell on that blessed word a little while—"We have *received* the atonement." We do not buy it; we receive it without money, and without price. We do not complete it, we receive it. "It is finished" was the verdict pronounced upon it long before we were born. We did not assist in commencing it, nor can we add anything to it, neither is there any need that we should wish to do so. We receive reconciliation. It is a free gift. We have only to put out our hand and take it; we have only to be empty vessels to be filled with it. We receive it perfect. Oh, that precious word "*receive;*" How well it suits all cases. A person may be very poor, but I never yet met a person who was too poor to receive; in fact it is the poor man who is the most willing and ready to receive. When the pitcher is empty it is in the fittest state to receive, for when it is full it cannot receive; and the lower, the more humble, the more broken, the more ruined, the more condemned, I was almost about to say the more near being damned, the more fit you are to receive divine grace. I put it as strongly as I can in order that any here who are despairing may lay hold of it. If you are emptied to the last drop, and cannot find a trace of a footstep of anything good in you, why then you are ready to receive. Surely, if you have nothing, you are the very man who can receive what Christ has provided.

Let me explain the process of receiving reconciliation. It begins thus: The man being already on the first step, knowing that he wants reconciliation, believes the truth about the gospel. Now, the gospel is that reconciliation, is made for every soul that believes in Jesus. It is a great mercy when a man becomes clear about that and accedes to it as God's truth. God is not reconciled to anybody who will not believe in Christ, but he is reconciled to every soul that trusts in Jesus. No wrath remains against a believer in Jesus; to such God is all love and tenderness. For all sinners who receive Christ by faith Jesus was a true and effectual substitute, he suffered in their stead, and bore that they might never bear the divine wrath that was due to sin. Now, be very clear about this, for though we preach it every Sunday we have need to repeat it still. Many teach that Christ has made an equal atonement for all men; but, since a great number of men are lost, it is evident that their guilt was not effectually removed, neither were they actually reconciled. If those men were all reconciled to God and yet were cast into hell, there is little to be desired in so useless a reconciliation. An atonement for all which does not save all is not in itself an effectual atonement; it is clear that if it of itself saved one for whom it was offered it would save all: the same cause if complete within itself would always produce the same effect. An atonement said to be universal is also admitted to be ineffectual, unless all are reconciled to God by it. The fact is, there is no redemption worth having but the particular redemption by which the Lord Jesus redeemed his own people only, that is to say, made for all who believe in him an effectual sacrifice. Now, if you can receive that truth cordially it will mightily help you:—God is reconciled to every believer.

Then, the next step to receiving reconciliation is to become a believer, because then the man is reconciled. How can I become a believer? Why, of course only by believing. And what is to believe? The other word for it is "trust." Jesus Christ made a full, satisfactory, substitutionary atonement for every soul that trusts in him: I trust him, therefore I know that he has made a full satisfaction for me. I received the reconciliation the moment I trusted him. I have believed God's record concerning his Son that he is able to save me, and I know for that reason, and I do not want any other reason, that I am reconciled to God and God to me. There is the long and the short of the actual process of reconciliation by faith.

The soul becomes consciously reconciled to God, yet further, when peace flows into the soul as the result of the conviction that God is reconciled through Jesus Christ. My heart feels this morning perfect reconciliation with God, because I know that whatever my sins may have been, and I know they are far more than I think them to be—they were all laid upon Christ's head upon Calvary; and whatever punishment was due to me for my sins Christ has borne on my behalf. How do I know that he bore my sins in particular? Is it because I think he bore the sins of all men? By no manner of means. That would give me no comfort, because some men are lost, and I might be among them, and if Jesus bore the sins of all men, it is clear that his bearing sin in that sense is not in every case effectual; but, when I know that he so bore the sins of believers that they are clear, and am also certain that I am a believer, I feel the profoundest peace of mind. Search my soul through and through, and there is not an honester thought in my nature than this, that I rest on Christ alone. Very well, then my sins are forgiven me since they were laid on Jesus, and they cannot be in two places. If Christ took them they are not on me. Jesus was punished for them, and God cannot punish two individuals for one and the same sin. If he laid my sin upon my substitute he cannot lay it upon me. God is not unrighteous to forget Christ's labour of love for me. Payment he cannot demand twice, first at the bleeding Surety's hands, and then again at mine. O ye heavens, was there ever heard of such a monstrous injustice as for Christ to be a substitute for a sinner, and then that sinner to be punished after Christ was punished in his stead? It cannot, must not, shall not, be even thought of: it were a blasphemy atrocious. I have God's word for it, that Jesus died for believers; then am I sure he died for me, and that I cannot be condemned. The peace which that belief sheds over the mind is wondrous. There is no peace like it.

Out of this there arises a reconciliation to God more and more deep and happy, for the Spirit of God, from time to time, more and more opens up to the believer the work of Christ; he shows him that this work was no novelty, that it was no mere expedient invented late in the day, but that eternal love had laid out this plan before the clouds were weighed, or the mountains were upheaved. Then the Holy Spirit reveals the all-sufficiency of the true sacrifice of God. What merit there must be in the death of One who is divine! What a boundless extent of overflowing mercy there must be in the pangs and groans of One who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but

yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant for our sakes! Every believer here will bear me witness that the more fully he understands the work of the Lord Jesus the deeper is his peace; and, consequently, the more full is his sense of reconciliation to God.

Then, brethren, being persuaded of all this our heart drops her former enmity to God. What, saith the man? Has the Lord really forgiven me all, and has he forgiven me by giving up his only-begotten Son for my sake? Did he take him from his bosom whom all heaven adored, and give him up for me? How can I oppose him any longer? I yield and gladly call him Lord. Then our love is enraptured with his blessed character, and we magnify him with our whole heart. We adore as much his justice as his mercy, we love his holiness as well as his grace, for we see all blended in the person of the Only-begotten. We learn to bless God that he is angry with sin; we would not have him otherwise. We bless him that he did require satisfaction, for there ought to be a penalty exacted, lest sin through being condoned without punishment should be lightly thought of both by men and other races of intelligent beings. We thank God that he is just what he is, and we would not have him changed in any degree or manner. Ever since by faith we met the Lord on Calvary's bloody tree, and crossed hands over the great sacrifice for sin, all our enmity is slain. If the old lusts within us dare rebel, we proscribe them as traitors, and call in the aid of heavenly power to subdue them. Our inmost heart is now at one with God; in its very deeps we feel a delight in him.

Thus I have shown you the second step, or receiving the reconciliation.

III. By THE THIRD STEP we get into the brightest light—"we joy in God," he becomes our highest and loftiest joy. I must take you back a step for a minute. No man ever rejoices in God except the man who receives the atonement by Jesus Christ. Suppose a man should say, "I do not want an atonement; I am a good man, and always have been; I have not broken the law." Well, friend, I will tell thee what is according to nature and what I am certain is the fact;—thou wilt rejoice in thyself. I know if I were half as good as thou sayest thou art, I would rejoice in myself indeed. If I had kept the law from my youth up, and had never broken one of the commands of God, I assure you I would boldly say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are; I have kept thy law; I have done no sin in thought, word, or deed." I should rejoice in myself. Dear friends, you will never know anything of what it is to rejoice in God while you are self-righteous. Neither does any man rejoice in God who feels that he has obtained reconciliation with God by his own self-reforms. Reforms are admirable, and I would not say a word against them; but, suppose a man who was once far from God were able to boast that he refined himself into fellowship with God, in whom think you *would he rejoice?* Why, in himself certainly. Did I hear a man say, "I have had moral courage and resolution enough to make myself all I ought to be. I have brought myself up from the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and this is no small thing." My dear man, you are a fine fellow, let me pat you on the back. What? Do you say that you don't want to be patted on the back. Don't be angry, I quite agree with you. You do

that quite sufficiently for yourself, and I should do the same if I had so much to say for myself as you have. Why should I care to rejoice in God? Samson crying "Heaps upon heaps" is nothing to a man fighting in his own strength, and conquering all his spiritual foes. Why, my valiant friend, when you get to heaven you will throw your cap up and say, "Glory be to myself." No doubt you will if ever you get there. No, joy in God never could result from a man's saving himself. The only way a man comes to joy in God is by receiving reconciliation by grace, and I think that is clear to any thoughtful mind. If there be anything of our own of merit, or endeavour, which can bring us into a state of reconciliation with God, then we shall rejoice in it; but if there be nothing of our own, and we have simply to stand still and receive salvation, and take it all as a matter of the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, then we joy in God.

Let me dwell on this for a moment. The moment a man is reconciled to God his view of God alters entirely. Have you not noticed how your opinions of persons will vary? A neighbour has done you a displeasure, and, therefore, you do not esteem him. Very likely that person is a very excellent man, but you read everything he does in the evil light of suspicion. If he meets you with frank courtesy you think him a fawning hypocrite; and if he passes you by you set it down to haughty contempt. If he should offer to serve you, you would suspect that he wished to place you under a humbling obligation; and if he stands aloof, you feel sure that he gloats over your necessities. His name is no sweet sound to your ear, you have no joy in him. If, however, by a discovery of his kindness you escape from prejudice, his whole conduct wears another aspect. When a soul becomes reconciled to God by the way of the cross, as I have described, then its whole mind with regard to God alters; and from that moment it reads him aright, and understands him, and delights in him.

I will show you wherein a soul which is reconciled to God delights in him. First, in his very existence and person. That there is a God is to the Christian supreme bliss. "Oh," saith he, "what should I do without my God? The infidel may say there is no God, but if that were true I should have lost my father, my friend, my all." The Christian feels that his hope of prevailing over injustice and wrong lies in the fact that there is a reigning God who will set all things right at last. His hopes for preservation and sustenance spring from God's being the source of all life, and the giver of all good gifts to his people. If there were a place in the world where God came never, no Christian would ever go there; but, if there be a spot where God peculiarly reveals himself, beloved brethren, is not that where you delight to meet? And since we believe there is to be a fuller revelation of himself in heaven, is not that our main reason for longing to be there?—not because the angels are there, or because the harps of gold ring out superior melodies, but because we shall be with God, and shall be like him. Oh, yes, I do but speak your inmost hearts when I say you joy in the very existence of God. As loyal subjects rejoice that they have a king, as affectionate children rejoice that they have a father, as a loving spouse rejoiceth that she hath a husband; so do we, but infinitely beyond all this, rejoice that we have a God.

Next, we rejoice in his character. All the attributes of God are themes of joy and rejoicing to a Christian. "Why," saith he, "he is a merciful God; blessed be his name for that, else I had never been saved: he is a gracious God; glory be to him for that, for he can save the souls of my children by his grace. He is a powerful God, and I would not have him otherwise; this indeed is a well of joy.

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when he please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas:
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love;
He shall send down his heavenly powers
To carry us above."

We are glad that we have a God who can do all things on our behalf. The Lord is also immutable, and oh, what a sun of consolation that is, without variableness or shadow of a turning. I shift and change like the winds and the waves, but he is always the same. Many a fainting believer has drunk from this fountain when all others have failed him. Moreover, the Lord is faithful to his promises. What a joy is this! And he is holy, and just, and good; here too is joy, for if he be holy he cannot do an unrighteous action, and it were unrighteous of him not to save his people for the sake of his Anointed. Every attribute of God darts thunder and lightning upon an unreconciled man: and, on the other hand, every part of the divine character smiles with eternal sunlight upon a spirit which has received the atonement.

Beloved, when we come to joy in God's person and attributes, we further learn to glory in his sovereignty. Before our reconciliation we cavil at the divine will. If there is one doctrine in the world which reveals the enmity of the human heart more than another it is the doctrine of God's sovereignty. Men will bear with you unto that word, but when they hear the Lord's voice saying, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," they gnash their teeth and call the preacher an Antinomian, a High Calvinist, or some other hard name. They do not love God except they can make him a little God; they cannot bear for him to be supreme, they would fain take his will away from him and set up their own will as the first cause, and say, "These be thy gods, O Israel." But, the moment we are reconciled to God we consent that Jehovah should do as he wills. What better rule could be than the absolute empire of love? What can be better as a government for all mankind than the absolute authority of one so good, so true, so holy, and so just? Set up a limited monarchy in the universe! Yes, it were proper enough if the devil were the ruler; but, with God for the king, we want no check upon his superlative justice and immaculate holiness. He cannot do unrighteously or unmercifully. He must act according to his nature, and his nature and his name are love. Let love reign without limit; let love be sovereign; let love bear the keys of government upon her shoulder, and let her name be called the mighty

God. Much of men's hatred to the doctrine of sovereignty is rooted in their enmity to the sovereign himself; but when the heart is reconciled to God we can read the sternest passages of the ninth of Romans, or any other scripture, and say, "Amen, so let it be, what God ordains must be right."

When the soul becomes reconciled to God, again, it joys in God under all his dispensations. Of course we joy in God under comfortable dispensations. Query, whether we do not then very much divide our joy between the comforts and the God; but in dark times, when the comforts all go, we can joy in God if we can act as David did at Ziklag—when they spoke of stoning him, when his goods and his wives were gone and all his followers' wives too, David "encouraged himself in his God." "Oh," said he to the soldiers round about him, "do not fret; it is true we are beggars, but we have not lost our God; let us sing a psalm to his praise." Then might they have sung, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice," while they sharpened their swords to smite the foe.

Beloved, I will only add these two or three thoughts. Joy in God is the happiest of all joys. There are other sweets, but this is the virgin honey dropping fresh from the comb. Joy in God is also a most elevating joy. Those who joy in wealth grow avaricious, those who joy in their friends too often lose nobility of spirit; but he who boasts in God grows like God. It is a solid joy, and he who joys in God has good reasons for rejoicing. He has arguments which will justify his joy at any time. He who rejoices in God shall never be confounded or ashamed, world without end. It is an abiding joy. If I rejoice in the sun, it sets; if in the earth, it shall be burnt up; if in myself, I shall die; but to triumph in One who never fails, and never changes but lasts for ever, this is lasting joy. In a word, it is celestial joy. It flows like the river of God which rises at the foot of his throne and waters the celestial streets, while trees on either side bear all manner of fruits. Blessed is the man whose nature strikes its roots deep into the banks of this river,—he shall bring forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The only sad reflection is, and with that I close, that there are so many who know nothing about joy in God. They could never gaze upon yon stars and say, "My God, thou hast made all these, and I love thee; I love thee not as I fancy thou art, but as thou hast said thou art in the Scripture; I would not alter thy nature if I could; I would not tempt thee by saying, 'Do not this or that;' whatever thou doest I admire, for I am reconciled to thee, and I joy in thee." When Mungo Park looked at that little piece of moss growing in the desert where he was lost, he thought, "God is here taking care of that little moss," and his heart was full of gladness. I know a Christian woman who was in great family trouble, and was near despairing, but she saw a little feather on the floor, which the draught of air from under the door blew to and fro, and the thought came into her mind, "God knows the motion of every filament of that feather, and he is moving it; God is here;" and all her sorrow disappeared, and she rejoiced in God. Did you ever feel like that? You know how your child feels when you put it to bed. As long as its mother is there it does not cry, but

when she goes it is sad. Did you ever feel towards God as the child does to its parent? At this moment my soul is lying on God's bosom, and I am happy. God is mine, and I love him. Oh, how I love him! You unconverted ones cannot say that. I wish you could; for, if you are unreconciled to God, your state is a very perilous one, and at the same time a very mean one. I would not like to be at enmity with a good man who had always shown me kindness; I should not like to feel that I did not love good men. I must be a wretch if I do not respect and love the only perfect Being. If good for anything myself I shall be pleased to call the good my friends. Look at yourselves in that light and see, sinners, what mean creatures you are. I pray you may say, "We will not be so mean any longer; we will be at peace with God." There is only one way of reconciliation, and that is you must receive the atonement which Jesus wrought out by his death. But, that way is most suitable to you, and I hope you will agree with it at once. Oh, may the Spirit of God make you put out your receiving hand. Is it palsied? Does it quiver and shake? Never mind; a palsied hand will suffice to receive with. I have seen many a shivering beggar beg in the streets, but he could always receive; I have never found his hand too feeble for that. Put forth that trembling hand and take the Saviour by trusting in him. The moment thou trustest him thou art saved; God is reconciled to every soul that trusts Christ. May God grant you may feel the power of the reconciliation by his Holy Spirit. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Romans v. 1—11; Isaiah xii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

COVENANT BLESSINGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 14TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."—Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 27.

LUTHER has well said that the experience of the minister is the best book in his library. I am persuaded it is so, and that God often leads his servants through peculiar states of mind, not so much for their own benefit as for the sake of those to whom they may afterwards minister. It is not long ago since I felt myself when engaged in devotion cold and dead, and in looking into my own heart I saw no ground of comfortable assurance as to my being a possessor of the grace of God: my feelings towards the great Father in heaven were not, as far as I could judge, those of a child: my love towards Jesus Christ for his redemption was almost extinct. I thought over the story of his cross without emotion, and I recalled to my mind the history of his everlasting love without gratitude. My soul was not, as it sometimes is, like the crystal lake which is ruffled with every passing breath of the breeze, but like some northern sea hardened into iron by the fierce reign of endless winter; the sublime truths of infinite grace stirred not my soul. My heart sank within me for a moment, but only for a moment, for there flashed across me this thought,—"The Holy Spirit can produce within your heart all those emotions you are seeking for, all those desires you fain would feel, all the meltings, and the movings, and the yearnings, and the rejoicings, which are significant of the grace of God." Under the influence of that truth, as in a moment, my deadness and coldness were driven away, and I was filled with adoring love. Then I wondered greatly that the Lord should deign to handle such coarse material as our nature, that he should condescend to work upon such gross spirits, such grovelling minds, such carnal understandings as ours. And when, by faith, I perceived that he could not only there and then give me to feel spiritual life, but could maintain it against all hazards, and perfect it beyond all imperfections, and bring me safe into his eternal kingdom and glory; an act of faith exerted upon the Holy

Spirit through the cross of Christ made my soul eager for prayer, and my joy and peace in believing were more than restored to me. Then, I said within myself, there may be others in a like case, and especially there may be seeking souls who, seeing what must be wrought in them before they can hope to be partakers of the eternal rest, may despair that such a work should ever be done, and looking only to themselves, may be inclined to give up all hope, and conclude that within the pearly gates they can never enter. Perhaps, I thought, if I remind them that "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," that Jesus Christ's bequest to us, in virtue of his having gone to heaven, is an Omnipotent One, who can work all our works in us, causing us to will and to do of his own good pleasure,—the thought may encourage their hearts, and enable them to look with restful confidence to him who works all our works in us.

Our text is a portion of that delightful rendering of the covenant of grace which is given us by Ezekiel, and we will, for a single moment, ask you to remember the persons with whom the covenant of grace was made. An early version of the covenant of grace was given to Abraham, and this in Ezekiel is a repetition, expansion, or explanation of the same. This covenant, and that form of it made with Abraham, concern the same individuals. Let us then remind ourselves that the covenant was not made with the fleshly seed of Abraham. If it had been, it would have run in the line of Ishmael as well as that of Isaac; but it was not made with Ishmael, for what saith the Scriptures, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." The covenant of grace was not made with the children who are born after the flesh as was Ishmael, but with those who are born according to the promise as was Isaac, who was not born by virtue of the energy of the flesh, for of Abraham it was said that he was as good as dead, and as for Sarah that she was long past bearing; but Isaac, the child of laughter, the child of joy, the heir of the promise, was born according to the power of God, and not after the energy of nature. Isaac evidently typifies not the man of works but the man of faith. The man of works is born after the flesh, he has reformed himself, he has done his best, he continues to do his best, he is the child of his own energy, he is the result of human power, he is under the law, for he tries to save himself by the law, he is, therefore, the son of Hagar the bond-woman, and he is under bondage, and his destiny may be learned from the words, "Cast forth the son of the bondwoman, he shall not be heir with my son." But the man of faith has received his faith supernaturally, it has been wrought in him by the Holy Spirit; it is not the fruit of the creature's power, it is the gift of God: it is the child of promise, and it is the child of joy and laughter to him; it is a fresh spring of joy within his soul. The man of faith, therefore, is the heir of the promise, and the partaker of the covenant, since he believes in Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. The man who rests upon the grace of God, and believes in God as holy Abraham did, he is a faithful man, and, consequently, he is one of the sons of the father of the faithful.

Let every man, therefore, who believes in Jesu sChrist this morning know assuredly that every word of this text belongs to him, and shall

be fulfilled to him. I earnestly pray that many a poor sinner may put in his claim and say, "I have no works, but I believe in Jesus Christ; I come now and rest myself upon the bloody sacrifice offered upon Calvary, and I humbly receive the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, by simply depending on him." To every one who exercises faith in God, even though it be but a weak and struggling faith, the precious promise we are about to expound is a heritage which cannot be taken away from him.

The main promise of the text before us is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; but observe that the text divides itself thus: first, it contains *an assured promise of preparation for the Spirit's indwelling;* secondly, *a plain promise of that indwelling;* and, thirdly, *the blessed results which flow therefrom.*

I. Observe, first, we have here to all God's covenanted people, or in other words, to all believers, a promise of PREPARATION FOR THE SPIRIT'S INDWELLING. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" This promise is as a cluster of nuts, or a bough with many golden apples. Like the cherubim of Ezekiel it has four faces, all smiling upon the heirs of salvation. Like the new Jerusalem it lieth four-square. It is a quadruple treasure worthy of four-fold consideration.

The first of the four blessings is *the gift of a new heart.* "A new heart also will I give you." The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in the old heart; it is a filthy place, devoid of all good, and full of enmity to God. His very first operation upon our nature is to pull down the old house and build himself a new one, that he may be able to inhabit us consistently with his holy spiritual nature. A new heart is absolutely essential, we must be born again or the Spirit of truth cannot abide within us.

Observe where the inward work of grace begins. All man's attempts at the betterment of human nature begin from without, and the theory is that the work will deepen till it reaches that which is within. They profess to emancipate the man from the grosser vices, trusting that the reform will go further, that he will be brought under superior influences, and so be elevated in mind and heart. Theirs is an outward ointment for an inward disease, a bandage upon the skin to stay the bleeding of the heart. Miserable physicians are they all. Their remedies fail to eradicate the deep-seated maladies of humanity. God's way of dealing with men is the reverse. He begins within and works towards the exterior in due course. He is a mere quack who, seeing in a man the signs of disease, operates upon the symptoms, but never looks to the root of the mischief. It is very possible that by potent poisons an empiric may check unpleasing indications, and he may kill the man in doing so; but the wise physician looks to the fountain of the disease, and if it be possible to touch the core and centre of it, he leaves the symptoms to right themselves. If your watch be out of order the watchmaker does not consider it sufficient to clean the silver case, or to remove dust from the face; but he looks within and discovers that this wheel isbroken, this cog out of order, or the main spring needing to be renewed; he is not much concerned about setting the hands accurately

at first, for he knows that the external manifestations of the correct time will follow from the setting to rights the time-keeping machinery within. Look at our brooks and rivulets which have been by a lax legislature so long delivered over to the tormentors to be blackened into pestiferous sewers; if we want to have them purged it is of small avail to cast chloride of lime and other chemicals into the stream; the only remedy is to forbid the pollution, to demand that manufactories shall not poison us wholesale, but shall in some other manner consume their useless products. The voice of common sense bids us go to the original cause of the defilement and deal with it at its sources. That is just what God does when he saves a sinner, he begins at the origin of the sinner's sin and deals with his heart.

My brethren, what a difficult work this is: "A new heart also will I give you." If it had been said, "A new garment will I give you," many of us could have conferred the same boon. If it had been said, "A new speech will I teach you," this also, with a little skill, might have been arranged; and, if the promise had been, "new habits will I create in you," this also we could have attempted, and perhaps successfully, to imitate, for habits are to be engendered: but a new heart—ah, here human power and wit are nonplussed. Jannes and Jambres in Egypt could imitate some of the miracles, they "did so with their enchantment," and there is much in true religion which men can successfully counterfeit; but, as in Egypt, a point was reached wherein the magicians were foiled, so that they confessed, "This is the finger of God," so in the regeneration of our nature, in the changing the heart, the Lord alone is seen. Who shall pretend to give another a new heart? Go, boaster, and suspend the laws of gravitation, recall the thunderbolt, reverse the chariot of the sun, transform the Atlantic to a lake of fire, and then attempt to change the nature of the heart of man. This God alone worketh, for he only doeth wondrous things. The affections are the most powerful part of our nature, they to a great extent mould even the understanding itself, and if the heart be defiled all the mental faculties become disturbed in their balance. God, therefore, commences at the heart, and therein begins a work in which man cannot compete with him, nor can he even help him. God must do it. The same God who made men must new make them, if the new-making is to begin with a change of heart. Blessed be God, he is omnipotent enough to give us new hearts, he has wisdom enough to renew us, he has purity sufficient to cleanse us, he has abounding mercy to bear with us. Mark, he gives us "a *new* heart," not an old heart touched-up and mended; not an old heart a little purified and improved; but a new heart which enters into a new life, receives new inspirations, feeds on new food, longs for new happiness, performs new actions, and is, in fact, an inhabitant of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Brethren, I will read this sentence over again, "A new heart also will I give you;" and I would call your attention to the style of the language. It is "I will," and yet again, "I will." Jehovah's Ego is the great word. It is not "I will if," or "I will perhaps," or "I will upon certain conditions," but—"*I will* give." He speaks in a Godlike

tone. It is royal language, the very word of Him who of old said, "Light be," and light was. He who spoke the world into being now speaks the new world of grace into being in the self-same majestic voice.

Turn, now, to the second blessing—"*A new spirit will I put within you.*" Perhaps this clause may be explained as an interpretation of the former one. It may be that the new heart and the new spirit are intended to represent the same thing. But, I conceive there is more than this. "A new spirit,"—does not the term indicate that a new vital principle is implanted in men? We have often explained to you that the natural man is correctly and strictly speaking a compound of soul and body only. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; and, as we bear the image of the first Adam, we are body and soul only. It is our own belief that in regeneration something more is done than the mere rectifying of what was there: there is in the new birth infused and implanted in man a third and more elevated principle,—a spirit is begotten in him; and, as the second Adam was made a quickening spirit, so in the new birth we are transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus, who is the second Adam. The implantation, infusion, and putting into our nature the third and higher principle is, we believe, the being born again. Regarded in this light, the words before us may be regarded as an absolute and unconditional promise of the covenant of grace to all the seed that a new spirit shall be put within them. But, if we view it as some do, we shall then read it thus—the ruling spirit of man's nature shall be changed. The spirit which rules and reigns in Godless, Christless men, is the spirit of a rebellious slave, the spirit of self. Every natural man's main motive is himself, even in his religion he only seeks self. If he be attentive to prayers and sermons, it is that he himself may be saved; and if he fears God, and dreads the terrors of his law, it is on his own account—not that he cares for God's glory, God's honour, or the rights of God—not one whit; he has no more interest in God than a rebellious slave has in the property of his master. He wears the yoke, but he groans under it; he would gladly enough escape from it if he could; he is only happy when he is breaking his master's laws and fulfilling his own selfish will. But, when the Spirit of God comes upon us, to make our spirit a fit place for his residence, he takes away the spirit of the slave, and gives us the spirit of a child, and from that moment the service of God becomes a different thing: we do not serve him now because we are afraid of the whip, but nobler motives move us; gratitude binds us to the Lord's service, and love gives wings to the feet of obedience. Now the Lord is no more regarded as a tyrant, but as a wise and loving parent. Whatever he may do with us, we rejoice in his wisdom and goodness. We view him no longer with suspicion and dread, but with confidence and joy. No more do we ask "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" but we desire to come near to him, and in our sorrows our cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat." It is a revolution indeed, when the hatred and dread of a slave are exchanged for the loving subjection of a son. This is one of the precious privileges of the covenant of grace, which I trust, beloved, many of you have already received, and which I hope others who have not received it will seek after. If they have believed in Jesus,

a new spirit, a spirit of sonship is their privilege; let them not be content unless they have it now.

A third and further blessing of the text is the *removal of the stony heart.* "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." I do not think the Lord removes at once the *evil* heart out of any man's flesh; there it remains to be fought with, like the Canaanites in Canaan when Israel had entered there, to prove us and to try us, but he does take away the stony heart at once. The stony heart is a hard heart. The moment anything strikes a stone it repels the blow; when the gospel is heard by a hard heart it throws it off again, it is not moved by it, it is not affected by it. You might as well throw feathers at a wall as preach gospel sermons to hard hearts, if your confidence be in the sermon itself; only God's power can make the feather-like sermon to penetrate the heart of stone. The Lord can do it, but the thing itself cannot be done by nature. The natural heart is an impenetrable heart; you may make scratches upon the surface, but you cannot enter within it to reach its inner core. What a marble heart by nature each one of us has. Till grace visits us the truth cannot enter us any more than light can shine into a stone. A stony heart is unfeeling, you can make no impression upon it: it cannot smart, it cannot breathe, it cannot sigh, it cannot groan,—a stony thing because a dead thing. Bruise it, and that which would make flesh black and blue does not affect the stone. Cut it, and that which would cause an agony to living flesh makes no disturbance in its granite mass. A cold, insensible thing, not to be warmed even by the rehearsal of the love of Calvary, such is our heart by nature. Dear hearers, such is the heart of every one of you till God deals with you,—just a lump of stone. Of course we speak not literally but spiritually, yet what we assert is a solemn fact. God says, "I will take away the stony heart." What a wonderful operation to take a stone out of the heart. How much more wonderful to take the stony heart itself right away and create a fleshy heart in its stead.

I would ask you again, though it may look like a repetition, to notice how royally the Lord speaks. He does not say, "Perhaps I will." He does not say, "If you are willing I will," but, "*I will,*" saith he. Oh, it is gloriously worded, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." The Lord's omnipotence can accomplish it. We have heard of many expedients for softening hard hearts, but none of them are of any avail. I know preachers who delight in talking of a mother's tears, and a father's grey hairs, of dying children and consumptive sisters, and I believe these are all legitimate topics; but, no hearts are ever turned from stone to flesh merely by natural emotion. You may make a man weep over his dead child or his dead wife, till his eyes are red, but his heart will be black for all that. Men's hearts are changed by quite another agency than oratorical or rhetorical appeals to the natural affections. I readily admit that such appeals have their own sphere, but for the renewing of the heart something much more effectual is wanted than natural emotion. It is written, "I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh," and there is the secret of the matter.

The fourth promise of the preparation of the heart for the indwelling of the Spirit is this: "*I will give you a heart of flesh,*" by which is meant

a soft heart, an impressible heart, a sensitive heart, a heart which can feel, can be moved to shame, to repentance, to loathing of sin, to desiring, to seeking, to panting, to longing after God; a tender heart, a heart that does not require a thousand blows to move it, but, like flesh with its skin broken, feels the very faintest touch,—such is the heart which the Holy Spirit creates in the children of God. It is a teachable heart, a heart willing to be guided, moulded, governed by the divine will: a heart which, like young Samuel, cries, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth":—an obedient heart, ready to be run into the mould, plastic beneath the sacred hand, anxious to be conformed to the heavenly pattern. This is an early work of grace in the soul, for as soon as ever the gospel is heard in power, and the Spirit of God comes upon a man, long before he enters into the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free, he ceases to have a heart of stone: long before he can say, "Christ is mine," he becomes tender and impressible under the truth, and it is a great mercy it is so; it is a blessed sign of a work begun which will be effectually carried on, where the heart trembles at God's word, where there are earnest desires towards Christ, and the man is no longer a braggart rebel, but a trembling child come back to his father, and longing to cry, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee."

Beloved, it is meet here to add a word of caution to some of you. Do not mistake natural tenderness for that heart of flesh which God gives. There are many persons who are naturally very impressible, many amongst women, and some amongst men. For this characteristic they are rather to me admired than censured; but, let them not mistake this for a work of grace. A heart of wax is soft, but it is not a heart of flesh. The softness of nature is not the sensitiveness of grace. It is often the case that some persons who are religiously sensitive are equally sensitive the other way, and, while you can influence them for good, others can as easily influence them for evil. They happen to be just now religious because the associations surrounding them have that tendency, but were they under other influences they would be sceptical if not utterly irreligious. They would have been lovers of the pleasures which others pursue had not home habits sobered their minds, for their hearts are still unrenewed. Mere religious impressibility is not grace, it is nature alone, and I even fear that to some it is a temptation to be so extremely impressionable. I am not always sanguine concerning persons who are readily excited, for they so soon cool down again. Some are like india-rubber, and every time you put your finger on them you leave a mark, but it is wasted time, because they get back into the old shape again as soon as you have done with them. I was preaching once in a certain city, and a very worthy but worldly man went out of the congregation while I was in the middle of the sermon, the third sermon he had been hearing from me during the week. One who followed him out asked him why he left, and he frankly replied that he could not stand it any longer, "for," said he, "I must have become religious if I had heard that sermon through. I was nearly gone." "I have been, added he, "like an india-rubber doll under this man, but when he goes away I shall get back into the old shape again." Very many are of the same quality; they have so much natural amiability, good sense, and conscientiousness, that the gospel ministry

has a power over them, and they feel its influence, though, alas, not so as to be saved by it. Beware, then, that you do not mistake the gilding of nature for the solid gold of grace. When God's grace helps the preacher to wield the gospel hammer, and it comes down with power upon a piece of flint, how speedily the stone flies to shivers, and what a glorious work of heart-breaking is done, and then the Lord comes in and gives, by his own almighty grace, a heart of flesh. This is the change we want, the taking away of the stone, the giving of the heart of flesh.

Let us read these four promises again, and I hope they will reach any poor trembling soul who may be saying, "I would but cannot repent, I would but cannot feel; if ought is felt 'tis only pain to find I cannot feel. My heart is so bad, so hard, so cold, I can believe in Christ but I cannot change my nature." Poor soul, there is no need you should, for there is one who can do the work for you, and these are his absolute promises to you if you are now looking to Christ upon the cross and resting all your hopes in him. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

II. But time flies, and therefore let us consider, in the second place, THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST. When the Spirit has thus prepared his habitation, he comes to reside within the renewed man. I call your attention to each word of the text.

Observe first, that the Lord says, "I will put *my Spirit* within you." Now it does not say, "the influences of the Spirit shall come within you,"—note that: but, "I will put *my Spirit* within you." It is literally the fact that God himself, the Eternal Spirit *in propria persona*, in his own person, resides and dwells within the renewed heart. I again remark that it is not said, "I will put the grace of my Spirit, I will put the work of my Spirit," but, "I will put *my Spirit* within you." It is the Holy Ghost himself who in very deed lives in every heart of flesh, every new heart and right spirit. Can you get that thought? Simple as it is, it is one of the greatest marvels under the sun. An incarnate God is a mystery,—the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; but, here is another mystery, God dwells in every son of God. God dwelleth in us, and we in him. The mystery of the incarnation is not greater than that of the Holy Ghost's indwelling, nor does it appear to me to involve more condescension. I marvel at Christ's dwelling *with* sinners, and I marvel equally at the Holy Ghost's dwelling *in* sinners. God himself, for whom the universe is not too vast a temple, the ever blessed Spirit in whose presence the heavens are not clean, yet saith, "To this man will I look even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." The indwelling of the Holy Ghost within us implies the exercise of his influences, the bestowal of his gifts, and the implantation of his graces; and, moreover, it involves the exercise of all his sacred offices, for where the Holy Ghost indwells he acts as a teacher, an illuminator, a Comforter, a Creator, a strengthener, a preserver: all that he is in all his offices he will be according to his own will to every man in whom he takes up his abode.

Note a little word also in the text worthy of your attention. "I will put *my* Spirit within you." It is not the spirit of angels, it is not the

spirit of good men, it is God's own Spirit who takes up his residence in every sinner's heart when God renews it. "*My* Spirit." And, perhaps, this may allude to the fact that this is the self-same Spirit which abode without measure in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have a union of experience with Christ in the fact that the same oil which anointed him anoints us, the same dew which fell upon his branch refreshes ours, the same holy fire which burned in his breast is kindled in ours. "I will put *my* Spirit within you."

Observe also carefully the words, "*within you*," "I will put my Spirit "*within you*." We thank God that we come near to the Spirit of God when we devoutly read the Holy Scriptures, for he wrote them, and his mind is in them; but we have a greater privilege than this. We thank God when the Spirit acts upon us under a sermon, or under any form of Christian teaching, so that we feel the Spirit of God to be with us; but we have a richer privilege even than this. "I will put my Spirit," not with you, nor side by side with you, nor in a book, nor in an oracle, nor in a temple, nor in one of your fellow-men, but "I will put my Spirit *within* YOU," in your own souls, in your own renewed hearts. This is marvellous. Augustine, when reflecting upon the various glories which come to God, and the benefits which accrue to men through redemption, none of which could have been revealed without the fall of Adam, exclaimed, "*O beata culpa!*" "O happy fault;" and I have the self-same expression trembling on my lips. Where sin abounded grace has much more abounded. Sin, which laid man in the dust, and made him like a devil, has afforded an opportunity for mercy to step in; and lifted humanity higher than before. What was man in Eden compared with man in Christ? In Paradise he was perfect in beauty, but in Jesus he wears a radiance superlative, for the Holy Ghost is within him. In Adam man was made a living soul, but in Christ Jesus he has now risen to the dignity and majesty of a quickening spirit.

My brethren, where the Holy Spirit enters he is able to subdue all things unto himself. When the ark came unto the Philistine temple, down went Dagon; and when the Holy Ghost enters the soul, sin falls and is broken. If the Holy Spirit be within, we may rest assured he will tolerate no reigning sin. He is a spirit of burning, consuming our dross; a spirit of light, chasing away our darkness. When he makes a heart his temple, he will scourge out the buyers and sellers who pollute it. He is not only the purifier within but the protector too; from temptations that assail us from without he is as an unconquerable garrison to our soul, making us impregnable to all assaults. Treasonable sins lurk within us, but the omniscient eye of God discerns each evil ambush, and he lays his hand upon every sin which hides itself away in the dark recesses of our nature. With such an indweller we need not fear, but that this poor heart of ours will yet become perfect as God is perfect; and our nature through his indwelling shall rise into complete meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh, what blessings are here, and in what royal language are they all promised! "I will put my Spirit within you." How positive! How decisive! Suppose they will not accept the Spirit? Suppose they strive against the Spirit? Suppose their free-will should get the mastery? Suppose

nonsense! When the Lord says, "I will," nothing remains to be supposed. If he speaks to chaos, it is order. Do not say, "Suppose chaos refused to be arranged?" When Jehovah speaks to darkness, it becomes light. Do not say, "But, suppose the darkness resists?" What shall resist his fiat? When the Lord comes forth in his omnipotence who shall stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" When the Spirit comes to deal in sovereign grace with the hearts of men, without violating their wills he has the power to accomplish his divine purpose, and it shall be accomplished to the praise of the glory of his grace.

III. Lastly, we must ask you to give your thoughts a moment to THE BLESSED RESULTS which come from all this. The indwelling Spirit leads every man in whom he reigns into obedience to the ways of God. I said that the work of grace is commenced from within, but the work does not end there. Before we have considered the whole of the covenant promise we shall find that change of life is guaranteed, a change apparent in works and actions, "Ye shall keep my judgments and do them." We do not begin with works, but we go on to works. Faith first receives the blessing, and then produces holy work. We will not allow the effect to take the place of the cause, but we are equally sure that the effect follows after the cause.

Now, observe the promise of the text before us: "I will cause you to walk in my statutes." The soul that possesses the Spirit becomes active. It walks. It is not passive, as one carried by main force; it works because the Spirit works in it, "to will and to do of his own good pleasure." The man who has no active godliness may fear whether he has any grace at all. If I am only a receiver, and have never brought forth fruit, I may fear that I am the ground that is "nigh unto cursing," for if I were a field that the Lord has blessed, I should yield him a harvest. The Spirit *causes* us to walk, but yet *we* ourselves walk. He works in us to do, but the doing is actually our own. He does not repent, and he does not believe; he has nothing to repent of, and he has nothing to believe. Neither does the Spirit perform works for us—we are led to do these ourselves. We repent and we believe, and we do good works, because he causes us to do so. A willing walk with God is a sweet result of the Holy Spirit's indwelling.

The Holy Ghost leads us to holy habits, for, mark the phrase, "I will cause you to *walk* in my ways." The figure does not represent us as taking a run now and then, or as leaping a step or two and then lying down, but as walking on and on, steadily and continuously. Mere excitement may produce momentary zeal, and transient morality, but habitual holiness is the fruit of the Spirit.

Note, next, the delight it implies. "I will cause you to *walk* in my ways," not as a man who toils, but as one who walks at ease. The

believer finds it as sweet to walk in God's ways as Isaac felt it sweet to walk in the fields at eventide. We are not slaves sweating in sore bondage, but children serving with delight. His commandments are not grievous. His yoke is easy and his burden is light.

It implies, too, holy perseverance; the words have the meaning of continuing to follow after holiness. It is a small matter to begin, but to hold out to the end is the testing point.

The text promises to us a complete obedience,—"I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments." A Christian man is obedient to God,—he minds the first table; he is just to man,—he does not despise the second table. Statutes and judgments are equally dear to believers. We are not willing to give a lame, one-sided obedience to God. The Holy Ghost, when he makes us devout Godward, makes us honest manward.

And the Holy Ghost also works a holy care for righteousness in the soul. "I will cause you to *keep* my judgments;"—that is, to have an exactness of obedience, a precision, a deliberation, a willingness to find out God's will, and a care to attend to it in every jot and tittle. A man in whom dwells the Holy Ghost is careful not to yield himself to the traditions of men but to the commands of God. He pays no attention to the statutes of the great councils of the church, or the ordinances of popes, or the laws of priests, or the mandates of bishops; but he searches out the will of the Lord only. The knee of his conscience bows with lowly reverence before the Lord, but nowhere else. He who has bound us to his altar has loosed all other bonds, so that the traditions of men and the ordinances of priests are contemptible unto us. To God, and God alone, the renewed heart renders obedience, but that obedience he does render.

Now, to what a delightful consummation has our text conducted us. It began with a renewed heart, and it ends in a purified life. It commenced with taking away the stone and giving the flesh; now it gives us the life of Christ written out, in living characters in our daily practice. Glory be to God for this! O soul, if thou art a partaker of it, thou wilt join in this thanksgiving; and if thou art not renewed as yet, I beseech thee do not go about to find these good things anywhere but where they are. At the cross foot thou wilt find a change of heart; where fell the drops of blood from Jesus' nailed hands and feet there is salvation. The Spirit of God will give you a right spirit, and, consequently, a pure life. Look not to your own efforts; rake not the dunghill of your own heart; to the Holy Ghost look you through the blood of the precious Saviour.

Now, to close. All this glorifies God doubly. It glorifies God that a man should walk in his ways; it glorifies God yet more that such obedience should be the result of divine power. The outward life honours

God, but the inward, spiritual, gracious work which produced that life, honours him yet more abundantly.

While this glorifies God doubly, it ennobles the soul supremely. To be made holy is to receive a patent of nobility; to be made holy by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, oh, what shall we say to this! Bring hither the poorest peasant; let her if you will be an aged woman, wrinkled and haggard with labour and with years; let her be ignorant of all learning; but, let me know that in her there is faith in Christ, and that consequently the Holy Ghost dwells in her; I will reverence her above all emperors and kings, for she is above them. What are these crowned ones but men who, perhaps, have waded through slaughter to a throne, while she has been uplifted by the righteousness of Jesus. Their dynasty is, after all, of mushroom growth, but she is of the blood royal of the skies. She hath God within her; Christ is waiting to receive her into his bliss; heaven's inhabitants without her could not be perfected, nor God's purpose be fulfilled, therefore is she noblest of the noble. Judge not after the sight of the eyes, but judge ye after the mind of God, and let saved sinners be precious in your sight. Honour also the Holy Spirit. Speak of him with lowly awe. Never take his name in vain. Take heed lest ye blaspheme it. Reverently seek his company, rejoice in his gifts, love him, quench him not, strive not against him, bow beneath his power, and may he dwell in you, and make you meet to dwell with him for ever, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Romans iv; Ezekiel xxxvi. 24—32.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 21ST, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."—Psalm xxii. 27.

SOME have thought that this psalm was used as a soliloquy by our Lord when he was expiring upon the cross. It may be so. Fitter words could scarcely have been conceived, even by our Lord himself. We must not, however, strain a point to establish a conjecture, nor attempt to prove that which is not revealed to us. We have no sort of hesitation, however, in asserting that this psalm describes both the outward sufferings and the inward emotions of our expiring Lord, and in that light it becomes a very wonderful psalm indeed. Its clear prophetic description is an evidence of our Lord's Messiahship, and indeed it is so full and plain that it is a key to his sufferings. Here the prophet explains the evangelist, just as in ordinary cases the evangelist is the expositor of the prophet. Towards the close of this psalm its tone is singularly altered, mournfulness departs and joy occupies its place; the mighty hero sees the conflict ended, anticipates the victory, and begins to chant the conqueror's pæan. We have selected our text out of that part of the psalm which overflows with the joy of anticipated triumph, and we trust that this morning the joy of the Lord may be our strength, so that we may be moved to prayer and nerved for action. As this is the annual missionary Sabbath, I feel bound to preach upon the subject; yet, while I do so, I shall at the same time desire to speak personally to the souls of all present; for remembering that we are in a dying world; I, a dying preacher to dying hearers, would not deliver even a single discourse without appealing to the consciences and aiming at the hearts of those who are present. Because we are thinking of heathens, or of the coming triumphs of Christ in the latter days, we must not forget

those who are perishing before our eyes. Excuse, therefore, nay, commend me, if every now and then I drive right away from the subject to assail men's hearts.

I. Our first point this morning is, I think, pretty clear in the text, namely, that THE CONVERSION OF THE NATIONS TO GOD MAY BE EXPECTED. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship him." We are all agreed that such a thing is to be desired; it is indeed a "consummation devoutly to be wished," since this is the true and only remedy for the ills of human society. Nothing else will ever cure earth's woes, but the bringing of her back again to her God from whom she has wandered. We are equally well agreed, I think, in the sorrowful conclusion, that such a consummation does not appear at all likely to the eye of observation and the judgment of reason. How little progress has the kingdom of God made in the world in these latter days! In the heroic age of Christianity the cross was borne as a conquering symbol from land to land in a short space of time: the apostles were clothed with extraordinary power, and their immediate successors, retaining much of their spirit, went from strength to strength, till the nations heard the testimony of Christ, and myriads submitted to it. A long pause has intervened, with only occasional breaks, such as the Reformation, the times of refreshing under the Methodists, and the partial revival of our own times. Despite these hopeful outbreaks of life, the progress of Christianity has been very slight indeed, compared with what might have been expected from its rapid strides at the commencement, and compared with what might have been expected from the force of its essential truth, and from the fact that its message commends itself to the best sympathies of the human heart. Alas, alas! The battle is long and weary, and the end is not yet. So far from going on to victory, we so decline that men taunt us with the decadence of our holy faith, and foretel that we are nearing the period of decay, when something better will supplant the gospel. We do not believe the insinuation, we reject it as blasphemy; and yet we should not wonder if our lethargy and non-success have been the soil in which this noxious thought has grown. It is unquestionable that the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, except to those who regard it with very sanguine eyes, has not progressed of late as we could have desired. It would be fair to conclude, judging of things to come by the things that appear, and setting aside the hopes of faith and the teachings of revelation, that it is not probable that so spiritual a faith as that of Christ should ever subdue the nations. Men want a coarser system of religion; their minds are grovelling, they desire a creed which will tolerate their lusts, they crave a religion which will afford scope for their pride and their self-will. The doctrines of the Gospel kindle men's hostility, when they are fairly and honestly preached; there would be more opposition to it if it were not so frequently diluted, and even falsified by its professed teachers. True Christianity causes a warfare and a division, and has to force its way against inveterate hatred. Only the grace of God can make it spread. Yet, for all that, brethren, we judge not after the sight of the eyes, neither do we look into the future through the glass of human calculation: we believe in God, and viewing the future with

the eye of faith, we expect a complete triumph. As in the past, so in the future, the church walks by faith. We are to believe, and we shall be established. The sooner we have done with reasonings and conclusions drawn from things that can be seen the better; for, after all, our only reason, as far as I can see, for the firm conviction that the Gospel will yet subdue the nations, lies in this—that God will have it so; he has promised it, and he can effect his own purposes.

Certain persons in these days tell us that we must not expect to see the nations converted to Christ, nor hope for any general spread of the gospel. I have heard it said that we are to look upon the world as a great wreck, hopelessly going to pieces out on the surf yonder, where a thousand breakers loosen every timber, and quicksands are hungry to engulf the whole, and all we can hope to do is with the life boat to pluck here and there a soul out of the general catastrophe. God's elect will be rescued, but the nations will perish, and the mass of mankind will be castaways. According to this theory we are not to hope for a glorious future upon earth in the last days; at least, not one brought about by the conversion of men under the preaching of the gospel. They give us another picture which I need not paint this morning; but the universal spread of the gospel in the world is thought by them to be unscriptural. I cannot agree with them. I think them in error; and I have these reasons for it.

Our new-born nature craves for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and prays for it instinctively. Nor is the instinct wrong; for the Lord, when he was asked by his disciples to teach them to pray, said, "After this manner pray ye," and he gave them as part of the manner of their prayer the right to express the desire, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven." Do not your souls long for the conversion of your families? Does not the same desire make you pant for the salvation of the people among whom you dwell, your townsfolk and your countrymen? And, when you are nearest to God and most spiritual, have you not larger aspirations still? Do you not pray for the conversion of all mankind? Yea, have you not found yourselves breaking out with a cry like that of dying David, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory"? Do you think the Lord has taught his spiritual people to desire this, not in moments of excitement, but in times of sober fellowship with himself, and will he not grant it? Surely God the Holy Ghost knows what the mind of God is: Does he not make intercession in the saints according to the will of God? He has taught us to desire and long for, and pray for this, because he intends to give it. The prayers of the saints are the shadows of coming blessings. As you may prognosticate the storm by the motion of the mercury in the barometer, so may you much more infallibly foretell the future from the emotions, the longings, and the agonies of the saints of God. Therefore I feel that the whole earth must be filled with the Lord's glory, because the souls of his saints pine for it.

Does it not, again, seem a very unlikely thing to you that on this earth, where God has stood as it were foot to foot in the person of his dear Son with evil, that evil after all should vanquish him and win the day? Eden has been blasted, Calvary has been stained with blood; this is defeat so far; at least Satan thinks it so. Will it never end in triumph?

Shall it always be that the deliverer's heel shall be bruised, and is the time never coming when that same wounded heel shall break the serpent's head? Is half the prophecy uttered at the gates of Eden to be fulfilled, and the other half to be null and void? Up to this moment we see the church persecuted, the truth despised, God dishonoured, Christ rejected, idols set up, doctrines of devils taught, and the whole world lying in the Wicked One. Is Satan for ever to have his own way? Shall the King of kings never win this world unto himself? Hath he not died for the whole world? Is it not so said? We who hold the doctrine of a special redemption of the elect, and hold it firmly, yet never quarrel with those texts which speak of the redemption of the race, because we look for it, and believe that it will yet come. We trust the time shall hasten on when, as the morning chases away the darkness, so the truth, and the right, and the Christ of God shall from amongst the sons of men destroy sin, error, and rebellion. In his den has the old lion been bearded, and in his own forest shall he be slain. Even here, where Satan hath held high carnival and been Lord of Misrule, even here shall he be defeated and his power abolished. The strong man in his own house shall be bound by a stronger than he, and Christ shall be victor where the foe of God and man once reigned supreme. For this purpose came he into the world, that he mighty destroy the works of the devil, and I see not how this could well be if there is not to be a wider spread of the Gospel than we have seen as yet.

And again, brethren, we look for the extension of the Redeemer's reign in the world on account of the promises of reward for his redemption. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Do you think that he is satisfied yet—satisfied with a mere handful? for, certainly, no more are saved as ye tout of the world's vast population. Is Christ, the great King, satisfied to settle down in a corner of the world as ruler over one scanty province? Think ye that he doth not expect to divide the spoil with the strong when the nations shall flock unto him, and their kings shall bow down before him? Brethren, the present state of affairs does not satisfy us, and since our Lord's heart is larger than ours, it surely does not satisfy him. What Christian minister is satisfied with the progress of the gospel? What lover of the souls of men is fully at ease under present conditions? I shall never be at peace while so many of my hearers are unsaved. Yet, none of us bore the pangs which he endured, and cannot, therefore, measure the vastness of the expected recompense. Surely the ascended Redeemer deserves a numerous seed, a countless progeny, to be his crown of rejoicing. Shall not Jesus at last have the pre-eminence? Shall he not win more souls than Satan shall destroy? Is sin to prove itself mightier than divine love? When the tale is told and the number is made up, shall there be more in the kingdom of Satan than in the kingdom of Christ? Shall it be so? I dare not think it. My soul revolts from the dreary supposition, and therefore I look forward to the spread of the gospel over all parts of the world, and a period of the ingathering of the sons of men to Christ so large as to make up innumerable multitudes, and swell the army of the saved beyond all human computation.

But, brethren, these are only inferences and hopes, though fairly gathered from our spiritual instincts and from divine truths; let us turn to Scripture and read a few of its utterances which appear to us full of hope for the future. David shall be our first witness. Mark you, I am not about to give all the texts on the subject, nor a tenth of them, nor even do I suppose that I have selected the best; I have merely gathered a few as I remembered them.

In the Second Psalm God declares, concerning his dear Son, our Lord Jesus, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion; I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." What is added? "Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Will the heathen never be his? Shall he never possess the far-off lands and call them his own? Be ye sure that his prayers will yet be heard. Turn next to that Seventy-second Psalm, of which I might read the whole, for from beginning to end it flows over with gracious promise, but, as we should not have time to go through the whole, let us read from the eighth verse. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." Turn to the seventeenth verse: "His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed." If David be questioned yet again, he will reply in something like the same manner in the Eighty-sixth Psalm, at the ninth verse: "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name." We see not this as yet, neither in any era of human history has it been performed. We, therefore, confidently expect it by-and-by.

That glorious evangelist of old prophecy, Isaiah, has many passages to the same effect, and we will, therefore, quote one or two of them. In his second chapter, at the second verse, you will find him saying, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Of a similar purport is the eleventh chapter pretty nearly all through, where he speaks of the days of peace, wherein the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and says in the ninth verse, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The fortieth chapter also is a bright window through which the future may be seen resplendent in the sunlight of God. If you turn to

the fifth verse, the Lord speaks concerning the first advent of his Son: "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." This is but one verse out of many similar ones in the same connection. In the sixtieth chapter, he begins, as you know, with these words, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee." The whole of Isaiah is full of such clear visions and plain promises. If you will read in Daniel, you will find that the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands is to break in pieces the image of gold, and iron, and clay, and is to fill the whole earth. In one of his night visions, Daniel saw four great monarchies, typified by four beasts, all these have passed away as we know; and another part of his dream is even now being fulfilled; but then he saw a fifth monarchy, altogether dissimilar from those which had preceded it, which is most assuredly to be of equal extent, consequence, and glory with those which preceded it; yea, it is infinitely to excel them. We do not pretend to go into the minutiæ now or at any other time, for our knowledge thereof is slender; but, at any rate, we gather from Daniel and others that a day is coming when the kingdom of Christ shall be among men conspicuously, and his sceptre of right and truth shall sway mankind. Time fails me, otherwise there are many passages I might mention, such as Habakkuk ii. 14—"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord:" and Micah iv. 1—3. Note, however, our Lord's own parable of the mustard seed, which was the least of all seeds, but it grew and became a great tree. Some may think that the mustard seed parable has been fulfilled, and to these we grant that, compared with its beginning, the gospel is a great tree; but I cannot feel that we have reached at all to the satisfactory fulfilment of the prophetic parable as yet. There are birds of the air yet to come and build their nests in the branches of it. Though little at the beginning, the gospel kingdom is to be far greater than any of us have dreamed. The beloved disciple, I think, learned the future aright, when in the visions of God at Patmos, he heard a voice, which said—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." That is yet to be, and for it we hopefully and joyfully look.

Now, brethren, I have reminded you of this doctrine, which I believe is held by most of you, not because I thought you needed confirming in the belief of it, but because the consideration of its joyful hope is

likely to fire you with holy ardour. We shall not labour well if we do not labour in hope. If we think mission work to be a forlorn enterprise, we shall go about it with faint hearts and slack hands. If we do not believe in a great success ultimately to come, we shall not use great means. We shall straiten ourselves in action if we narrow our expectations. Certainly we have not used very great means yet, for all the missionary operations now being carried on in the world are very little more than casting the crumbs from under our table to the poor heathen dogs. We have not done so much as to give the fragments of the gospel feast to the nations. A few cheese parings and candle ends Christians have given away to missions, but little more. Liberality has barely yielded the tail-corn of her barn and the dregs of her winefat. We have not learned self-denial for Christ, and pinching ourselves for his service is a rare thing among us. The men who have gone abroad have not always been the pick and chief of the church; honour to them that they have gone at all, but small honour to the men of greater ability who ought to have gone forth, but have laid out their talents in some poor worldly business, and occupied their time in a far less worthy cause. If the church expects small results from missions, I readily concede that she is acting consistently with her anticipations; and if she has indeed given up the work as a hopeless case, I think she is doing about as little as she could consistently with the bare appearance of obeying her Lord's commands to evangelise the nations. May the day come when her spirit shall revive, when she shall feel that the earth belongs to Christ, and shall hear her Master's voice pealing like thunder within her conscience, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." May she rise to the dignity of her position, and perceive that her field is the world, since the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. All things are possible to him that believeth; may we yet receive the faith which subdues nations. When the church is ready for great events they shall occur to her. God has blessed us already up to the full measure of our fitness to be blessed, and perhaps a great deal beyond it; we have seen more gracious results than we could have expected from our poor efforts, but when the whole church shall become fired with the love of Christ, when every man's heart shall glow with a furnace heat of ardent desire for the glory of Jesus, then like molten lava from the red lips of a volcano, the current of church life shall burn a passage for itself. As soon as Zion shakes herself from the dust and goes forth to war in the strength of her Lord, she shall cause her enemies to flee before her, as Midian fled before the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

II. Our text teaches us very plainly that THE CONVERSION OF THE NATIONS WILL OCCUR IN THE USUAL MANNER OF OTHER CONVERSIONS. And here it is that I want the attention of unconverted persons especially. "The nations," it says, "shall remember, and shall turn unto the Lord, and shall worship before him." Observe the first step. They shall "*remember*." In this manner conversion begins in men. When he had come to himself the prodigal said, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare." He remembered the house from which he came out. The nations will one day remember God. Mysterious traditions are floating among them now. In mystic verse

and hoary legend, memories of the Creator are still preserved. Man is far off from God, but there lingers in the race some recollection of a happy past, when God and man were friends. It is so with individuals after their kind. Oh, may some of you have recollections which look Godward, and remind you of what you learned at your mother's knee, of what was taught you by a father's earnest lips. May you remember from whence you have fallen, and repent. Such regrets are holy and healthful. The prodigal remembered his sins, they came forcibly before him; the harlots and the wine cups were remembered with sorrow and loathing. May you, dear hearers, be moved by penitent memories of all the unhallowed past, for so shall repentance be created within you. The nations will by-and-by remember their wickednesses they committed; their debauchery, covetousness, tyranny, cruelty, and idolatry will be seen in their true colours, and they will mourn for them with sincere hearts. Oh, when will it come,—that blessed Bochim? At this moment I pray God's Spirit to make some of you remember your transgressions; may they come up in dread array before you; may you be convinced of sin, and made to tremble before God.

The nations will remember their idolatries against God; and the disappointments which have come of them. They will say one to another, "To what purpose is it that we have worshipped these gods of stone? Have they helped us in the day of trouble? We have sacrificed unto them; have they given us rain in the day of drought? Have they helped us in the hour of death?" And, as they recollect this, they will turn unto God. I would that some here might remember and say, "What has the flesh done for us? What have the pleasures of the world ministered to us after all? We are even now degraded and made ashamed; what fruit have we in these things?" Blessed memories will one day come over this wicked world, and lead it to turn unto the Lord. It is the work of the missionary to stir the world's memory, to go and tell it over, and over, and over again about its Saviour; for there is a power which God has kept alive in human consciences which will respond to the voice of the gospel. I hope that response will be found in some here to-day. But, the day is coming when the conversion of the nations shall begin by their remembering their God, remembering their sins, remembering the disappointment of their idols, and remembering to turn unto the Lord.

The next step in the conversion of the nations will be their *turning to the Lord.* Do you note that? "They shall remember and turn unto the Lord." It is not merely they shall turn. Ah, my dear hearers, there is a vast difference between "turning" and "turning to the Lord." Some of you turn from drunkenness to total abstinence, and I am glad enough of that, but it is far short of a saving change. Others turn from profanity to decent speech, and we are thankful for that; but that also is not salvation. Genuine conversion lies in turning *to the Lord.* Hence, in Hindostan, it is a very small gain that has been effected by educational institutions: the people are evidently turning, but what matters it if they turn from a false god to no god? Is it really a turn for the better? I do not know whether we might not more hopefully contend against an idolatrous Hindostan than with an infidel Hindostan. It is much the same devil, though he may appear in a

different shape. The conversion of the heathen will not come through their being gradually civilised into Christianity: do not entertain any hope in that direction. God will turn them to himself, and the gracious work will be done. We do not at home see sinners gradually come to God by processes of reformation, for generally these reformations lead to self-righteousness, but ever find them coming to God first, and then reforming afterwards, and even so shall we find it with the heathen. We have first to seek their turning to God, and after that we may look for civilisation, education, refinement, and so on. Man must first, in the gospel, come to his Father, and then shall he lose his rags of barbarism, and put on his robes of education and his shoes of progress and liberty, and hear the music and the dancing of joy. First, the kingdom of God and his righteousness must be sought, and all the rest shall follow.

Note the next point. "They shall *worship* before him." Every sinner who has truly turned to God becomes a worshipper; he adores the Christ, he adores the Father, he adores the Spirit; he was a rebel before, he is a worshipper now. What a blessed sight it will be to behold an adoring world. At this day around the august throne of heaven all the stars are floating, perhaps inhabited each one by a distinct race; from every star as from a silver bell there ascends to the throne of God music most sweet and solemn. From one only star, —this sin-darkened earth,—discordant sounds arise. This poor earth shineth not in the light of Jehovah as once it did; a demon's wing has covered it and hidden from it the light of the central sun; it is swathed in cloud and mist to-day. But, see ye not, it beginneth to shine forth, seen from the throne of God it is not altogether darkness. As when the new moon first shows her slender ring of light, so the earth is rimmed and edged with a divine illumination which shall increase till the whole circle of the globe shall be irradiated, and shall in full orbed splendour reflect the glory of God. Then, also, shall music blend with the growing brightness, light and sweetness shall be wedded again, and earth like a lamp of God's sanctuary and a golden bell of the high priest's garment shall shine forth and ring out the praises of her God. O blessed consummation! The Lord send it, and the Lord send it soon. But, you see plainly that the conversion of the nations follows the usual rule, and by no means differs from the conversion of men at home. It is a remembering, a turning to the Lord, and a worshipping of him. They turn to Christ, they look to him and are lightened; and then, straightway, they begin to adore and reverence him who hath saved them.

It is clear then, that we are to seek the salvation of the nations by using the ordinary means. If we expect to see them saved in some extraordinary way differing from what we have hitherto seen, we shall be disappointed, and we shall be led into practical mistakes. We have nothing to do in Hindostan, or in Caffraria, but just what the apostle did in Asia Minor, and what we are doing here; we are to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. I do not believe that any race of men needs a peculiar gospel, or a novel mode of administering it. There may be different styles of preaching; God will give us those; but there need be no other mode of action than the apostolic one,— "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the

word." The mode prescribed in the marching orders of our grand Captain is this: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;"—not found schools, nor debate with sceptics, nor civilise, but "preach the gospel," "preach the gospel," "preach the gospel." Do this to every creature, and the sure results will follow in one place as in another; men shall remember, shall turn unto the Lord, and shall worship him. Dear unconverted hearer, the very best means for your conversion are being employed now; and, therefore, I would remember that if these fail, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead. This deserves your solemn consideration, and I beseech you to lay it to heart.

III. The last point is the most important of all. THE MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS RESULT ARE TO BE FOUND AT CALVARY. Our text is in a Calvary Psalm, its connection is full of sacrificial suffering. If you desire to comprehend its real meaning you must hear it from the dying lips of the incarnate God. It is through the cross that the nations shall fear and tremble and turn to God.

Note then, first, that the death of Christ secures the conversion of the nations. Every conversion is the result of the death of Christ. It is the Spirit's work to minister life and spiritual health, but thy blood, O Christ, hath the glory of it! It were vain to talk of conversion if there had been no redemption; or to speak of man's remembering and turning to God if thy cross, O Saviour, had not been lifted up as the way of salvation for all who look to it! On the cross the Lord Jesus redeemed effectually all his people, and he must have them. On the cross he established the covenant of grace for all the souls for whom he died, and he will lose none of them, nor suffer them to miss the blessing. His blood shall not be shed in vain. The stipulations of the covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified by his own blood, must stand fast and firm, and one of those stipulations is this, "in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." It must, therefore, be so. I do not look for the triumph of the church to her treasuries, nor to her institutions of learning, nor even to her zeal, or to the popular ability of her preachers: I look to the cross. O conquering crucified One, thou hast secured the victory, for thou hast finished the redemption of myriads, and therefore they must be saved! Let us, when fainting in conflict, fall back into the arms of a dying Saviour, and we shall find courage for the future fray.

The death of Christ is, moreover, our motive for attempting the spread of the gospel throughout the world. Because Jesus died we feel that he must be glorified. I never feel so ardent for his cause as when I have been baptised afresh into his agonies. If we stand at his cross and view his thorn-crown, and his marred countenance, and his pierced hands, and nailed feet, and if we gaze with affection into the gash where the soldier's spear set abroach his heart,—we cannot but feel that he must have human hearts to worship him. He is Lord of my soul, and I would fain see him equally dear to my brother men. Jesus has won many hearts in England, and in other countries too, but oh, he must have more, he must have more. He must have England for his own, he must have Scotland, he must have the United States, he must possess Europe, he must govern the whole world, it is imperative

that he should possess them. We feel that he must reign. If we could throw ourselves upon the pikes of his foes to win the victory for him we would rejoice. If like the old Swiss hero we could gather up all the death-bearing lances into our own bosom and die in opening a road to victory for our fellow-soldiers it were a destiny for which to bless God. It would be a glorious thing to die, if by our martyrdom the world might be won for him. High thrones for Jesus, where shall we find them? Bright crowns for Jesus; where shall we find them? We will snatch them from your heads, ye kings, if there be no others. Nay, but your diadems are too mean for his brow, and are only worthy to be thrown into the dust before him; they have not lustre enough for him. We will find jewels for him in the tears of penitents, and gold in the songs of believers; we will weave chaplets for him out of souls emancipated, and spirits perfected. He must have them; he must have them. Such an One as he cannot but be great unto the ends of the earth.

And, brethren, as his death is thus the security of future triumph, and is to us the impelling motive for the winning of it, so is his cross the instrument of our victory. We shall conquer the world, but it will be by the cross. The old legend of Constantine, "*In hoc signo vinces*," hath truth in it for us. By this shall we conquer—by the cross, by the preaching of Jesus Christ, and nothing else. I charge the church of God not to hamper herself with a mass of lumber, either of ceremonies, buildings, schools, or officers; but to go forth with the sling and the stone of David. Saul's armour is, however, in good favour at this hour, and the church looks everywhere but to her God. It is miserably amusing to mark the way in which our so-called National Church tries to win men to God. It has recently been stated that in seven of the leading Ritualistic churches in London the subscriptions to foreign missions only reached the sum of £7 13s. 2d. for a whole year. It is fair to add that one of them contributed £5 13s. 10d. to a special fund for Honolulu, but even with this extra effort the total is not raised to £14, and the average is not £2 a piece. These seven superfinely apostolic churches contributed between them £13 7s. for foreign missions, and yet the incumbent of one of them, before the Ritual Commission, stated in his evidence that the cost of his choir alone was "about £1,000 a-year." O model church, with what wisdom hast thou acted? Behold thou givest £2 for the salvation of the heathen, and a £1,000 for a box of whistles and a set of singing men and singing women to make music withal. Verily, this is a plain index of the whole business. Theirs is a religion of sensuous gratification, and not of soul-winning. To charm ears with music, eyes with dainty colours, and noses with incense, this is their religion. Men pay money for these delights, even as they would to the opera, or any other amusement in which their tastes find pleasure; but, for the winning of souls abroad, a few halfpence may suffice to show the lack of zeal. Dear friends, we know that souls are not to be won by music. If the world were indeed to be conquered by chants, to be converted by sanctuses, regenerated by organs, and saved by little boys in surplices, then it would be time for us to cease our ministry and give place to choir boys, opera singers, organists, and organ blowers. Then might we set up a vast array of gilded pipes, lift up the crucifix,

wave the censer, and cry, "These be thy gods, O Israel." But, while the Word of God remains unchanged, we shall rely upon the blood of the Lamb, and resolve to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Our hope of success lies, under God, in the preaching of the gospel. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The preaching of the cross will win the world, but all else is vanity of vanities. Therefore, brethren, let our ministry be full of Christ. Whether we preach at home or abroad, let us preach substitution, and tell of the vicarious sacrifice of Calvary. Let Jesus' death be our first theme and our last theme; utter all others in proportionate harmony, but let this be first and chief. Let our Lord in our ministry be "the chief among ten thousand." Let his cross be the standard to which all other truths shall rally. Oh, preach Christ, live Christ, catch the spirit of Christ, devote yourselves to Christ, drink of his cross, and be baptised with his baptism, and then it shall be that all the nations shall remember and shall turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the people shall worship before him." Sinner, thy hope is at the cross, hasten thither; anxious soul, thy peace is at the cross, fly thither; despairing soul, thy salvation is at the cross, look thither. One look will save thee. God help thee to give it now. Through those tears which dim thine eyes look at once, for Jesus smiles upon thee. Look thou to him, and thou shalt now have everlasting life. God bless you all, and God prosper his work in the world, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Psalm xxii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SIN-OFFERING FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 28TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty; or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned. And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and slay the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering. And the priest shall take of the blood thereof with his finger, and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar. And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour unto the Lord; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him."—Leviticus iv. 27—31.

VERY much of interesting truth clusters around the sin-offering. The type is well worthy of the most careful consideration, and I regret that we shall not have time this morning to enter into all its details. The reader of the chapter will perceive that it gives us four forms of the same sacrifice. These may be regarded as four views of the same thing, probably views taken by four classes of believers, according to their standing in the divine life; for, although all men who are saved have the same Saviour, they have not the same apprehensions of him. We are all cleansed, if cleansed at all, by the same blood, but we have not all the same knowledge of the manner in which it is effectual for cleansing. The devout Hebrew had but one sin-offering, but that was set forth to him under varying symbols.

The following remarks may aid you in understanding the type before us. The chapter begins with the sin-offering for the anointed priest, and describes it with the fullest detail. It then proceeds, in the thirteenth verse and onwards, to give the sin-offering for the whole congregation, and it is most notable that the sin-offering for the anointed priest is almost in every circumstance identical with the sin-offering for the whole congregation. Is not this designed to show to us that when Christ, our anointed priest, took upon him the sin of all the congregation of God's chosen as his own, there was demanded of him the same expiation and atonement as would have been demanded of his people

had they been reckoned with in their own persons? His atonement for sins which were not his own, but which were laid upon him by the Lord on our behalf, is equivalent to the penalty which would have been required of all the congregation of believers for whom his blood was especially shed. This is a memorable lesson, which ought not to be forgotten. We ought to see herein the inestimable value of the sacrifice of Christ, by which the many offences of a number that no man can number are for ever put away. There was given, in the death of our Lord, as full a recompense to justice as if all the redeemed had been sent into hell; nay, the truth goes far further than that, they could not have made a complete expiation, for even had they suffered for sin for thousands of years, the debt would "still be paying, never paid." Glory be to the name of our great Substitute, he by his sin offering hath perfected for ever them that are set apart.

In the case of the sin-offering for the priest we have a fuller picture of the atonement than is offered by the two latter instances, and you will please to note that the sin-offering was a victim without blemish. In the first two cases a bullock was to be slain. Thus the most precious animal the Hebrew owned, the noblest, the strongest, the image of docility and labour, was to be presented to make atonement. Our Lord Jesus Christ is like the firstling of the bullock, the most precious thing in heaven, strong for service, docile in obedience, one who was willing and able to labour for our sakes; and he was brought as a perfect victim, without spot or blemish, to suffer in our stead. The priest slew the bullock, and its blood was poured forth; for without shedding of blood there is no remission. The vital point of the atonement of Christ lies in his death. However much his life may have contributed to it, and we are not among those who, in the matter of salvation, separate his life from his death by a hard and fast line, yet the great point of the putting away of human guilt was the Lord's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. The victim was slain, and so the atonement was made. Returning to the passage before us, we find that the blood of this victim was taken into the holy place, which was immediately outside the sacred vail of the sanctuary; and there the priest dipped his finger in the blood, and sprinkled of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the vail of the sanctuary. So in making atonement for sin there is a perfect exhibition of the blood of Jesus before the Lord. That life has been given for life is openly proved where alone the proof is available. Before the offended Lord the vicarious death is thoroughly exhibited; for was it not written of old in the book of Exodus, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Our sight of the blood Christ gives us peace, but it does not make the satisfaction; it is God's sight of the blood which makes the atonement; and, therefore, seven times before the vail was this blood exhibited before the Lord, that a perfect atonement might be made.

The next thing the priest did was to go up to the golden altar of incense, which stood hard by the vail, and to put some of the blood upon each one of the horns, indicating that it is the blood of the atonement which gives power (for that is the meaning of the horns) to intercession. The sweet perfume of the altar of incense stands for the

prayers and praises of the saints, and especially for the intercession of Christ Jesus; and, because the blood is there, therefore, Christ's intercession is heard; and, therefore, our prayers and praises come up with acceptance before the Lord.

Then the priest removed to the brazen altar of burnt sacrifice, and all the blood which remained he poured out at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering which stood at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Full bowls of blood encrimsoned the base of the altar. Blood was seen on every side, on the vail, on the golden altar, and now upon the altar of brass. Within and without the holy place but one voice was heard, the voice of the blood of atonement crying to God for peace. The whole tabernacle must have been almost at all times so smeared with blood as to have been far from pleasant to the eye, and this was intended to teach to Israel, that God's anger against sin is terrible, and that the dishonoured law will be satisfied with nothing less than the giving of life for life, if sinners are to be saved. The altar of burnt offerings was the altar of acceptance, it was the place where those sacrifices were presented in which there was no mention of sin, but which were brought as thanksgivings to God. Therefore, as much as to teach us that the very ground and foundation of the acceptance of the Christian, and his offering, lies in the precious blood of Jesus; full bowls of blood were poured upon the base of the altar. See what wonders the precious blood of Jesus Christ can do, it is the strength of intercession and the foundation of acceptance.

From the bullock which had been slain certain choice pieces were taken, and especially the inward fat, and these were laid upon the altar and consumed, to show us that even while the Lord Jesus was a sin-offering he was still accepted of God, and though his Father forsook him so that he cried out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" he was still a sweet savour unto the Lord in the obedience which he rendered.

But, the most significant part of the whole sacrifice remains to be described, and you will notice that it is only described in the first two forms of the sin-offering. The priest was not allowed to burn the bullock itself upon the altar, but he was commanded to take up the whole carcase, its skin, flesh, head, and everything, and carry the whole forth without the camp. It was a sin-offering, and therefore it was loathsome in God's sight, and the priest went right away from the door of the tabernacle, past all the tents of the children of Israel, bearing this ghastly burden upon him; went, I say, right away, till he came to the place where the ashes of the camp were poured out, and there, not upon an altar, but on wood which had been prepared, upon the bare ground; every single particle of the bullock was burned with fire. The distance the bullock was carried from camp is said to have been four miles. The teaching of which is just this, that when the Lord Jesus Christ took the sin of his people upon himself, he could not, as a substitute, dwell any longer in the place of the divine favour, but had to be put into the place of separation, and made to cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews puts the matter clearly, "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own

blood, suffered without the gate." Outside Jerusalem our Lord was led to the common place of doom for malefactors, for it is written (and oh, the power of those words, I dare not have uttered them if they had not been inspired), "He was made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The blessed Son of God was made a curse for us and put to an accursed death, by being gibbeted upon the cross, and all because sin anywhere is hateful to God, and he must treat it with indignation. The fire of divine justice fell upon our blessed sin offering until he was utterly consumed with anguish, and he said, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. Now, this is the only way of the putting away of sin: it is laid upon another, that other is made to suffer as if the sin belonged to him, and then, since sin cannot be in two places at once, and cannot be laid upon another and rest upon the offerer too, the offerer becomes clear from all sin, he is pardoned and he is accepted because his substitute has been slain without the camp instead of him. I have thus introduced to you the first two forms of the sin-offering. It seemed necessary to begin there.

The third form of the sin-offering was for a ruler, a person of considerable standing in the camp. There is nothing very remarkable about that third form which need now detain us; we, therefore, come to the subject in hand. The sin offering for a common person.

I. And, here, we will begin our discourse upon the text itself by speaking of THE PERSON, *a common person.* It gives me unspeakable joy to read these words, "If any one of the common people sin," for which one of the common people does not sin? The text reminds me that *if a common person sin his sins will ruin him;* he may not be able to do so much mischief by his sin as the ruler or a public officer, but his sin has all the essence of evil in it, and God will reckon with him for it. No matter how obscurely you may live, however poor and unlettered you may be, your sin will ruin you, if not pardoned and put away. If one of the common people sin through ignorance, his sin is a damning sin, he must have it put away, or it will put him away for ever from the face of God. *A common person's sin can only be removed by an atonement of blood.* In this case you see the victim was not a bullock, it was a female of the goats or of the sheep, but still it had to be an offering of blood, for without shedding of blood there is no remission. However common-place your offences may have been, however insignificant you may be yourself, nothing will cleanse you but the blood of Jesus Christ. That verse is quite correct—

> "Could my zeal no respite know,
> Could my tears for ever flow,
> All for sin could not atone:
> Christ must save, and Christ alone."

It is true the sins of great men cover a larger space, but yet there must be a bloody sacrifice for the smallest offences. For the sins of a housewife or of a servant, of a peasant, or of a crossing-sweeper, there must be the same sacrifice as for the sins of the greatest and most influential. No other atonement will suffice, the sins of the common people will destroy them unless the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse them. But here is the point of joy, that *for the common people there*

was an atonement ordained of God. Glory be to God I may be unknown to men, but I am not unthought of by him. I may be merely one of the many, but still he has thought of me. As each blade of grass has its own drop of dew, so each guilty soul coming to Christ shall find an atonement for itself in Christ. Blessed be the name of the Lord, it is not written that there is a sacrifice for the great ones of the earth alone, but for the common people there is a sin-offering, so that each man coming to the Saviour finds cleansing through his precious blood.

Observe with thankfulness that *the sacrifice appointed for the common people was as much accepted as that appointed for the ruler.* Of the ruler, it is said, "the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him." The same thing is said of the common person. Christ is as much accepted for the poorest of his people as for the richest of them. He as much saves the unknown as he does the apostolic names of high renown. They need the sacrifice of blood, but they need nothing more, and the blood which pleads before the throne of God speaks as well for the least as it does for the chief of the flock.

Come hither, then, ye who belong to the common people, if any of you have sinned, come at once to Jesus the great sin-offering. Though ye are common in rank, know ye not that the common people heard him gladly. Publicans and sinners pressed around him to hear him. Though ye are but commoners in your wealth, possessing little of this world's goods, yet, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Common in your talents and in your gifts, yet he bids you come, for these things are hid from the wise and prudent. It is not for those who think themselves distinguished that he has especially laid down his life, but "the poor have the gospel preached to them," and in their salvation he will be glorified.

Mark, it says, "If any one of the common people sin through ignorance, or if his sin which he hath sinned come to his knowledge, then he shall bring his offering." Has it suddenly come to the knowledge of any person here that he has sinned as he thought he had not sinned? Has some fresh light broken in upon you and revealed to you your darkness? Did you come to this house depressed in spirit because you have discovered that you are guilty and must perish, unless the mercy of God prevent you? Then, come ye common people who have discovered your sin, and bring your sacrifice. Nay, it is here already for you. Come and accept the sacrifice which God provides, and let your sin be for ever put away.

I wish the words of the text could provoke the same feelings in every heart that they do in mine, for I could fain stand here and weep my soul away in joy that for the common people's sin there should be a sacrifice, for I can put my name down amongst them. I have sinned, I have come to the knowledge of my sin, and I thank God I need not ask myself any other question, be I who I may or what I am, though but one of the common people, there is a sin-offering for me.

II. Now, pass on from the person to THE SACRIFICE. "He shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned."

Observe first, my brethren, that there is a discrepancy between the type and the reality, for first *the sin-offering under the law was only for sins of ignorance.* But, we have a far better sacrifice for sin than that, for have we not read in your hearing this morning those precious words, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin," not from sins of ignorance only, but from *all* sin. Oh, that blessed word "all." It includes sins of knowledge, sins against the light and love of God, sins wantonly perpetrated, sins against man and against God, sins of body and of soul, sins of thought and word and deed, sins of every rank and character, "sins immense as is the sea"—all, all are removed; no matter what they be, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin." Yet do I bless God that the type deals with sins of ignorance, because we may get a gospel out of it. We have committed many sins which we know not of. They have never burdened our conscience because we have not yet discovered them; and, besides, we do not know them to be sins; but Christ takes those sins too, and prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Cleanse thou me," said David, "from secret faults," and that is just what Jesus does. It used to be a doctrine of the church of Rome that no man could have a sin forgiven which he did not confess. Truly, if it were so, there would be no salvation for any of us, since it is not possible for the memory to charge itself with the recollection of every sin, nor for the conscience to become so perfect as to take cognizance of every form of transgression. But, while we ought to confess to God all sins which we know; and, while we should confess them as much as can be in detail, yet, if through ignorance they remain unacknowledged, except in the gross and the bulk, Jesus Christ, the sin-offering, bears our sins of ignorance, sins which we knew not to be sins when we committed them, or which we still know not to be sins. He takes them away; it must be so, for he "cleanseth us from *all* sin"—sins of ignorance, as well as sins against light and knowledge. Now, what comfort there is here for all you of the common people; be your sins what they may, there is a sin-offering which takes away all sin from you. However ye may have defiled yourselves, though ye be black as night and hideous as hell, yet is there power in the atoning blood of the incarnate God to make you white as newly-fallen snow. Washed once in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, there shall remain upon you no trace of guilt.

Note another discrepancy, that *the sinner of the common people in this case had to bring his sacrifice*—"he shall *bring* his offering." But our sin-offering has been provided for us. You remember the question of Isaac to his father Abraham, as they went up Moriah; he said to him, "My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" and Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." Isaac's enquiry might have been the eternal question of every troubled heart. "O God, where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" Who will bear human sin? But JEHOVAH JIREH. God hath provided himself a lamb for a burnt-offering and a sin-offering too, and now we have not to bring a sacrifice for sin, but have simply to take what God provided from before the foundations of the world.

Now, let us notice that in the type *the victim chosen for a sin-*

offering was unblemished; whether it was a goat or a sheep, it must be unblemished. How could Christ make an atonement for sins if he had had sins of his own. Had he been guilty, it would have required that he should suffer for his own guilt. But, being under no obligation whatever to the law of God, except such as he voluntarily undertook, when he had rendered obedience he had an obedience to give away, and he has graciously bestowed it upon us. When he suffered, his suffering not being due to God on account of anything that he had personally done, he had so much of suffering to spare, and he has transferred it to us. The immaculate Christ has died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. This is full of comfort, for if you will study, O seeking soul, the perfect character of your blessed Lord as God and as man, and see how fairer than the lilies is he in matchless purity, you will feel that if he suffered, there must be in such suffering a merit unspeakable, which being transferred to you, can save you from the wrath to come. In the dear Redeemer we have an unblemished sacrifice.

But, I do not understand, and, therefore, cannot explain why the victim was a female in this case, for most of the sacrifices were males of the first year, but this is peculiar in being a female. Is it because there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus? Or, am I wrong if I conjecture that this was intended to typify a view of Christ taken by one of the common people, and therefore it is purposely made incomplete? It is an incomplete view of Christ to have before you the female as the type, and the type is purposely made incomplete in order that this truth may be before us,—that while a complete view of Christ is very comforting, instructive, and strengthening, yet even an imperfect view of him will save us if accompanied by real faith. If we should make a mistake upon some point, yet, if we are clear upon the main truth of his substitution, it is well with us. On purpose, then, it seems to me, that a victim was introduced which did not with exactness set forth Christ, that the Lord might say to his people and to us, "You have not reached the perfect conception of my dear Son, but even an imperfect apprehension of him will save you, if you believe in him." Who among us knows much of Christ? Oh, brethren, we know enough to make our hearts love him; we know enough of him to make us feel that we owe all to him, and we desire to live for his glory; but, he is far greater than our greatest thoughts. We have only skirted the shores and navigated the little bays and creeks of Christ; we have not sailed out into the main ocean, nor fathomed the great deeps as yet. Yet what little we know of him has saved us, and for his dear sake we are forgiven and accepted in the Beloved. Does not the Lord seem to say to us, "Poor souls, you have misconceived my Son, and made many mistakes about him, but you do trust him, and I save you." A certain woman thought that there was power in the hem of Jesus' garment to make her whole. She was mistaken in imagining that there was a healing efficacy in his dress, but since it was a mistake of faith, and reflected honour upon Christ, the Lord made it true to her; he made virtue go out of himself even into the skirts of his garments for her sake. And so, though we may err here and err there in reference to our Lord, yet, if our soul does but cling to him like a child to its mother, knowing little of its mother except that

its mother loves it, and that it is dependent upon her, that clinging will be saving.

But, the main point about the sacrifice was, it was *slain as a substitute.* There is nothing said about its being taken outside the camp—I do not think it was in this case: all that the offerer knew was, it was slain as a substitute. And, dear hearers, all and everything that is essential to know in order to be saved is to know that you are a sinner and that Christ is your substitute. I beseech the Lord to teach every one of us this, for though we should go to the University and learn all knowledge, though we should ransack all the stores of learning, unless we know this,—"He loved me and gave himself for me," we have not learned the very first principles of a true education for eternity. God gives us to know this this very day.

III. But, now thirdly, we pass on from the sacrifice to THE AFTER CEREMONIES; upon which only a word. In the case of one of the common people after the victim was slain, the blood was taken to the brazen altar, and the four horns of it were smeared, to show that the power of fellowship with God lies in the blood of substitution. There is no fellowship with God except through the blood, there is no acceptance with God for anyone of us except through him who suffered in our stead.

But, then secondly, the blood was thrown at the feet of this same brazen altar, as if to show that the atonement is the foundation as well as the power of fellowship. We get nearest to God when we feel most the power of the blood, ay, and we could not come to God at all except it were through that encrimsoned way.

After this, a part of the offering was put upon the altar, and it is said concerning it, what is not said in any other of the cases, "the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour to the Lord." This common person had, in most respects, a dim view of Christ, compared with the others, but yet there were some points in which he had more light than others, for it does not say of the priest that what he offered was a sweet savour; but, for the comfort of this common person, that he might go his way having sweet consolation in his soul, he is told that the sin-offering he has brought is a sweet savour unto God. And oh, what a joy it is to think not only has Christ put away my sin if I believe in him; but now for me he is a sweet savour to God, and I am for his sake accepted, for his sake beloved, for his sake delighted in, for his sake precious unto God. When God had destroyed the earth by a flood, and Noah came out of the ark, you will remember that he offered a sacrifice unto God, and it is said, "The Lord smelled a sweet savour," or a savour of rest, and then he said I will no more destroy the earth with a flood, and he entered into a covenant with Noah." Oh, happy is that soul that can see Christ his sin-offering, as being a savour of rest unto the Lord Most High, so that a covenant of grace is made with him, a covenant of sure mercies that shall never be removed.

But, I must pass on again.

IV. The fourth point is one to which I ask all your heart's attention. I have purposely omitted AN ESSENTIAL ACT in the sacrifice, in order to enlarge upon it now.

Please observe, that in all four cases there was one thing which was never left out, "He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin-offering." It was no use killing the bullock, it was no use slaying the heifer, no use pouring out the blood, no use smearing the horns of the altar unless this was done. The guilty person must come, and must himself lay his hands upon the victim. Oh, that while I speak of this, some of you may lay your hands upon Christ Jesus, according to the verse of the poet—

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

Now that act of laying on the hand signified *confession*. It meant just this: "Here I stand as a sinner, and confess that I deserve to die. This goat which is now to be slain represents in its sufferings what I deserve of God." O sinner, confess your sin now unto your great God, acknowledge that he would be just if he condemned you. Confession of sin is a part of the meaning of laying on of the hand.

The next thing that was meant by it was *acceptance*. The person laying his hand said, "I accept this goat as standing for me. I agree that this victim shall stand instead of me." That is what faith does with Christ, it puts its hand upon the ever blessed Son of God, and says, "He stands for me, I take him as my substitute."

The next meaning of it was *transference*. The sinner standing there confessing, putting his hand on the victim and accepting it, did by that act, say, "I transfer, according to God's ordinance, all my sin which I here confess, from myself to this victim." By that act the transference was made. You know there is a blessed passage, which says, that "the Lord hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all," from this expression an objection has been raised to that blessed hymn.

"I lay my sins on Jesus."

Yet, I think, the expression is quite correct. Cannot both utterances be true? God did lay sin in bulk upon Christ when he laid upon him the iniquity of us all, but by an act of faith every individual in another sense lays his sins on Jesus, and it is absolutely needful that each man should so do, if he would participate in the substitution.

Now, do observe, I pray you, that this was *a personal act*. Nobody could lay his hand upon the bullock, or upon the goat, for another; each one had to put his own hand there. A godly mother could not say, "My graceless boy will not lay his hand upon the victim, but I will put my hand there for him." It could not be. He who laid his hand there had the blessing, but no one else, and had the godliest saint with holy but mistaken zeal said, "Rebellious man, wilt thou not put thy hand there, I will act as sponsor for thee," it had been of no avail; the offender must personally come. And so, dear hearer, must you have a personal faith in Christ for yourself. The word is sometimes interpreted *to lean*, and some give it the meaning of leaning hard. What a blessed view of faith that gives us. Sometimes, according to the Rabbis, those who brought the victim leaned with all their might, and pressed upon

it as if they seemed to say by the act, "I put the whole burden, weight, and force of my sin upon this unblemished victim." O my soul, lean hard on Christ, throw all the weight of thy sin upon him, for he is able to bear it, and came on purpose to bear it, and he will be honoured if thou wilt lean heavily on him.

And, beloved, what *a simple act* it was. The man who would not be absolved from sin in this way deserved to perish—there was nothing but to lay his hand, nothing but to lean, how could he refuse. Faith in Christ is no mystery, no problem needing to be explained in long treatises,—it is simply, trust him, trust him, trust him, and you are saved. "There is life in a look at the crucified One." "Look unto him, and be ye save all the ends of the earth." Nothing can be plainer,—nothing can be simpler—why is it that so many puzzle themselves where God has given us simplicities. It must be that God made man upright, but he hath found out many inventions with which to bewilder himself.

The laying on of the hand was *the act of a sinner*. He came there because he had sinned, and because his sin had come to his knowledge. Had he been sinless there would have been no meaning in his bringing a sin-offering. Innocence needs not a substitute or sacrifice for sin. The sin-offering is evidently for the man who has sin, and what if I say there is no soul here to whom Christ is so suitable as the soul that is most full of sin. Thou that art a great, big, black sinner, a thorough-paced sinner, a damnable sinner, thou art the very sinner to come to Christ and glorify his grace. He is a physician who did not come into this world to cure finger-aches, and pin-pricks, but to heal great diseases, loathsome leprosies, and burning fevers. Come, thou sinner of the common people, come thou and rest alone on Jesus! I wish I knew how to speak of this theme so as to move your souls. Within a few months or years at the longest, we shall all be before the bar of God; and what if some of us should be there with our sins upon us? I am afraid some of you will be there unforgiven. O you to whom I have so often spoken, will you be there unpardoned! I shall not be able to make excuse for you there, and say you did not know the way of salvation, for I have preached it with great plainness of speech. I have often cast aside language which commended itself to my taste, to use instead thereof more homely words, lest one of you should miss my meaning. God knoweth I have often forsaken tracks of thought which opened before me, and which might have interested many of my hearers, because I have felt while so many of you are unsaved, I must keep on ploughing with simplicities, and sowing elementary truths, I am evermore telling over and over again the story of the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus. What, do ye hate your souls so much that you will damn them to spite Christ? Is there such a hatred between you and yourself that you will reject God's own sacrifice for sin? You cannot say it is difficult for you to avail yourself of the death of Jesus. It is but to lay your hand of faith on that dear head. What enmity must there be in your hearts that you will not be reconciled to God even when he makes the reconciliation by the death of his own dear Son. To what a pitch hath man's rebellion against his Maker gone, when, sooner than be at peace with him, he will

reject eternal love, and will for ever ruin his own soul. Oh, may God grant that some this morning may say, "I will stretch out my hand, I will trust in Jesus." You see that the hand to be stretched out is an empty one, and the heart which leans may be a fainting one. Weakness and sinfulness find strength and pardon by taking Jesus to be their All-in-all.

V. The last word I have to speak to you makes the fifth head, namely, THE ASSURED BLESSING. Turn to your Bibles, at the 31st verse; let every soul here that is conscious of sin read those last lines: "*and it shall be forgiven him.*" There is the sacrifice. The man must put his hand upon it. The sacrifice is slain, and "his sin shall be forgiven him." Was not that plain speaking? There were no ifs, no buts, no peradventures; but "it shall be forgiven him." Now, in those days it was only one sin, the sin confessed, that was forgiven, but now "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." In those days the forgiveness did not give the conscience abiding peace, for the offerer had to come with another sacrifice by-and-by; but now the blood of Christ blots out all the sins of believers at once and for ever, so that there is no need to bring a new sacrifice, or to come a second time with the blood of atonement in our hands. The sacrifice of the Jew had no intrinsic value. How could the blood of bulls and goats take away sin? It could only be useful as a type of the true sacrifice, the sin-offering of Christ. But in our Lord Jesus there is real efficacy, there is true atonement, there is real cleansing, and whosoever believeth in him shall find actual pardon and complete forgiveness at this very moment. What a joy it is to know that—

> "The moment a sinner believes,
> And trusts in his crucified God,
> His pardon at once he receives,
> Salvation in full through his blood."

I delight to believe that of Christ Jesus Kent's verse is true—

> "Here's pardon for transgressions past,
> It matters not how black their cast,
> And oh, my soul, with wonder view,
> For sins to come here's pardon too."

Our sins were all laid on Christ in one bulk, and were all put away at one time. Woe unto any man who should have to take his sins upon himself as they come, the blessing is that as our sins are committed they are still laid on Jesus, according to the words of the psalmist, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whom there is no guile." The believer sins, but the Lord imputes not his sin to him, he lays it still upon the scapegoat's head who bore our sins of old, even Christ Jesus our Saviour.

The pith of all my discourse is this, if there be a child of God here who is in the dark and burdened with sin, dear brother, dear sister, do not stand controverting with the devil as to whether you are a child of God or not. Do not be going over your experience and saying, "I am afraid I am a hypocrite and I have been deceived." But, for the

moment, suppose the worst. Let the devil take for granted all his accusations, and then reply to him in words like those of Martin Luther, "Thou sayest I am a great sinner and a law-breaker, and all this; to which I reply I will cut thy head off with thine own sword, for what if I be a sinner? it is written Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and I rest my soul as a sinner simply upon him." I like beginning again. The best way to get back lost evidences is to leave the evidences alone, and go again to Jesus. Evidences are very like a sun-dial,—you can tell what o'clock it is if the sun is shining, but not without; and truly a man of experience can tell the time of day without the sun-dial if he can but see the sun itself. Evidences are clearest when Jesus is near, and that is just the time when we do not need them. Here is God's direction for acting when under a cloud. "If any walk in darkness and see no light, let him"—what? Fret about his evidences? No, "let him trust," there is the end of it; "let him trust in the Lord and obey the voice of his servant," and the light will soon come to him. Come away, O burdened believer, to the sin-offering. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father." The fountain that was opened for sin and for uncleanness was not opened for the unregenerate only, but for the people of God, for it was opened "in the house of David," for the "inhabitants of Jerusalem," that is, for those who are God's people.

If there be a poor soul here who has never believed in Jesus, but is burdened with sin, I invite him, and I pray God the Holy Spirit to make the invitation effectual, to come now to Jesus Christ. I seem to think that when I was seeking the Saviour if I had been in this congregation, and had heard Christ set forth as bearing sin as a substitute, and heard the plain talk you have listened to this morning, I should have found peace directly; instead of which I was months and months hunting after peace, because I did not know this, that I had nothing to do, for Christ had done it all; and all I had to do was to take what Christ had done, and simply trust in him. Now, you know it, oh, may God add something to your knowledge! May he give you power to lay your hand on Jesus! Lean on him, soul; lean on him. If you cannot lean, fall back into his arms. Faint away upon the bosom of the Saviour. Trust him, rest in him, it is all he asks you, and then faith shall justify you and cleanse you, and shall give you sanctification, and by-and-by perfection, and shall bring you into his eternal kingdom and glory. The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—1 John i and ii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MAY 5TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."—Psalm cxli. 5.

THIS is a very difficult passage in the original, and it is hard to fix its meaning with absolute certainty. However, it is no business of mine, at this present, to go into the various interpretations which have been given, for I am aiming at something else; I am, for my immediate purpose, quite content with the authorised version. The meaning given to the passage by our translators is this, David says, although the righteous man should rebuke him most sternly so as to smite his conscience, and bring before him his wrong-doing, and even though he should do this with considerable severity, yet he would not be displeased with him, but would love him all the better, and be thankful to him for having acted so faithfully, and he would prove his love by continuing to pray for his reprover, should the good man at any time be overtaken by calamity. David would always give his honest censor a warm place in his prayers.

Now, if this be the meaning, and I think it is, it shows us that David was in the habit of praying for the saints; for if he had not been, he would not have said that even in their calamities his prayers should go up for them. He had made it his daily custom to bring before his God in his private prayers the names of God's righteous ones, or else, I say, he would not have made the remark that even if some of them should rebuke him and reprove him sternly, he still would continue to pray for them.

Our subject this morning shall be the high duty of intercession, a duty all too little regarded in these days. We shall speak upon it, first, as the text would lead us to do, in reference to *saints*, and, secondly, we shall urge it upon you on behalf of *sinners*.

I. First, then, we have to speak upon the duty of INTERCESSION FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

To arrange our thoughts in some order we will take for our first keynote the word *obligation*. It is incumbent upon every child of God

to pray for the rest of the sacred family. Doth not nature itself teach us this? I mean not the old nature, but the new nature created within us by the Holy Spirit. Did you not find, my brethren, as soon as you were yourselves possessors of divine life, that you began without any exhortation to pray for others? Your very first believing cries began with "*Our* father which art in heaven," and so included others besides yourself. Among the earliest prayers which a renewed heart offers will be one for the man through whose agency it was brought to Jesus. No new convert forgets to pray for the minister who was the instrument of his conversion. The newly-delivered soul also pleads for others who are still in the deplorable condition from which grace has enabled it to escape. "Thou hast brought my soul out of prison, Lord, set my fellow-captives free. In thy lovingkindness enable others to taste the sweetness of thy salvation." Then the Christian people who have at any time conversed with the convert, who have ministered to his comfort or instruction, will be sure to obtain a share in his prayers, for a renewed heart is a tenderly grateful heart, and a man is not born again from above who feels no thankfulness to earnest friends below. Set a bird free from a cage, and it will sing you its thanks as it speeds forth into the air, even thus, if you are enabled to open the prison doors of bondaged spirits, they will repay your loving efforts with prayer.

I say it is a natural instinct of the new-born believer to begin to intercede for others, and this instinct continues with him throughout life. It is one of the things that he must do, it is a pleasure to him to do it, it would be impossible for him utterly to cease from it, for the indwelling Spirit in his bosom maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And, brethren, as it is an instinct of the heaven born nature, so it is a law of the elect household. The saints in their due order may be described as "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Every believer has a watchman's place appointed him in the matter of prayer, and he is bound not to be silent, but to give the Lord no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. We are all equally bound to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and our prosperity is made to hinge upon it. The new commandment which the Lord has given us, in which he bids us "love one another," necessitates our praying for each other. How shall a man claim that he loves his brother if he never intercedes with God for him? Can I live continually with my fellow-believers and see their sorrows, and never cry to God on their behalf? Can I observe their poverty, their tribulation, their temptation, their heaviness of heart, and yet forget them in my supplications? Can I see their work of faith and labour of love, and never implore a blessing upon them? Can I wrap up myself within myself, and be indifferent to the case of those who are my brethren in Christ Jesus? Impossible. I must belong to some other family than that of God, for in the family of love, common sympathy leads to constant intercession. God forbid that we should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for our brethren. Every bee in the hive of the church should bring in its own share of

this honey to the common store. As all the rootlets of a tree traverse the earth in search of nutriment, and all suck in provision for the benefit of all, so should each believer with open mouth of prayer search out and drink in spiritual blessings for the benefit of the whole church. Forget not then, my brethren, the sweet obligation under which you are laid by your relationship to the saints, and their ever blessed Lord.

Moreover, beloved, we recognise a vital union among believers, a oneness of a very intimate kind. We are not barely brethren, but we are "members of the same body." Christ is the head of his mystical body the church, and we are all members of his body. Now, as in the human frame each separate limb, member, organ, vein, nerve, is needful to the whole, so in the church each believer is necessary to the rest, and the rest are needful to him. We may not be able to show what particular mischief would be done to the arm by an injury to the knee, yet, rest assured there would be a sympathetic suffering. No single cell or sac within the whole system can be out of order without in some degree affecting all the rest of the frame. Even so, God has made us dependent upon one another, far more than we imagine. In the church-unity every man contributes to the health or to the disease of the whole corporation, nor can he avoid so doing. No man liveth to himself in the church of God, and no man dieth to himself. When a believer grows in grace, he is enriched not for himself alone, the Christian community has increased its spiritual wealth by his gains. When, on the other hand, a man declines in divine things, and so becomes poor and feeble, it is not to himself alone that the injury occurreth, but in a measure the church is impoverished, weakened, and injured. O brethren, since this is the case, let us discharge abundantly the duties which we owe to the body of which we form a part; and in the delightful exercise of supplication let us abound more and more. Intercession should throb like a pulse through the whole body, causing every living member to feel the sacred impulse. Intercession is one of the least things which we can do, and yet it is one of the greatest: let us not be slack in it. A prayerless church member is a hinderance, he is in the body like a rotting bone, or a decayed tooth, and, ere long, since he does not contribute to the benefit of his brethren, he will become a danger and a sorrow to them. Brethren, let it not be so with any one of you.

Besides, brethren, if an argument were needed to touch our hearts, it is not far to find. We ourselves owe much to the prayers of others. Many Christians can trace their conversion to their mother's prayers which went up to heaven for them, when as yet their infant tongues could not pronounce the Saviour's name. A mother brought them to Jesus and besought him to lay his hands on them and bless them. Many of you owe your conversion to the pleadings of Sabbath-school teachers, or to the supplications of ministers, or to earnest individual Christians who were led to intercede for you. Now, if by the way of prayer you have received a blessing, show your gratitude by praying for others. Endeavour to confer the blessing in the same way as you have received it. For my own self personally, I say this morning that no man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me. I reckon, brethren, that the more of prayers I have the wealthier I am in real riches, in that form of personal estate which is better that gold and silver. An

old Puritan remarks that when a man thrives in business, he sets many hands to work for him, and, saith he, when a man grows in usefulness he brings many souls to pray for him, and so his business is carried on. The greater the expenditure of grace in the case of the Lord's servant, the more he needs intercessory help from all his brethren and sisters that he may be able to carry on his work under the divine blessing. I am under bonds, my brethren, to pray for you, since I know that many of you continually besiege the throne of grace on my behalf. I put the argument, therefore, to you, if you have received blessings through the intercession of saints, would you not be ungrateful indeed if you did not intercede for others in return? Did a mother's prayers bring you to Christ? Then, dear young mother, send up your entreaties to the Lord for your dear little one. Did a father's supplications lead to your salvation? Then, young man, uphold thy father with thy constant prayers, and so enrich his latter days. Freely ye have received, freely give. The soil fertilised by the dew gives back its harvest, do thou also make a fair return to the church which has been the channel of blessing to thee. It is not, therefore, a matter of choice with us, to-day, whether we shall pray for our brethren in Christ or not. Beloved brethren, you are not alive unto God, you have not the instincts of the new life if you do not intercede for the household of faith. You have not the love which is of God, which is the sure sign of regeneration, if you forget intercession: you are unmindful of the debt you owe, and you are acting unworthily of your professed union with the church of Christ, if intercession be neglected by you. As with a trumpet call, I would arouse you, my brethren and sisters, to effectual earnest prayer for the family of the living God.

Let us change our watch-word now from obligation to *honour*. What an honour it is to be permitted to pray for the saints! For, observe, this brings us into the closest conceivable fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ himself. We cannot assist in providing an atonement for human sin. "It is finished" said the Saviour, and finished it is. In that work we can have no fellowship except as we receive of its results, for "He hath trodden the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with him." In preaching the gospel to-day, we are exercising an office in which our Lord Jesus has now no share: the Holy Spirit helpeth us, but the man Christ Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, and his voice is not heard proclaiming the glad tidings. Therefore, in some respects, we have diverse occupations and exercise different offices, but, in the business of intercession we are one: at this very moment, our Lord is pleading before the throne, and when we intercede for his people we are doing precisely the same. We, in praying for the saints, have actual present fellowship with our great High Priest who intercedes within the veil. I say again, if I preach to-day, Christ is not preaching, but if I pray, my voice harmonises with his. If I pray for the brethren, I remember that he stands before the throne of glory with the breastplate on, having the names of all his chosen glittering there upon its precious stones. Is it not then a delightful thing to be partakers with the Son of God in the ministry of intercession? In this service he hath made us priests unto our God. He is the great Angel, with the golden censer, and the smoke of the incense which he offers ascends with

the prayers of the saints before the Lord. Beloved, if you would be conformed in service to the Lord Jesus, the opportunity is ready to your hand; be much in intercession for the saints.

And, what an honour it is that we, who so lately were beggars for ourselves at mercy's door, are now received so much into royal favour that we may venture to speak a word in the king's ear for others. It was sovereign mercy which allowed us to say, "Have mercy upon me!" but what condescension is this which has taken us into such nearness with itself that now we can come to the Lord, and say, "I would fain speak a word with thee for a brother of mine: I would venture to ask bounties at thy hands, my Father, for a sister who needs compassion." See, my brethren, how eminently you are promoted, you are ordained to the high office of "the king's remembrancers," to enquire of him concerning the good things of his covenant. You are constituted royal almoners for the King of kings, he sets before you his open exchequer and bids you ask what you will. O priceless grace; if thou, O believer, knowest how to ask by faith, thou mayst hand out to thy brethren wealth more precious than the gold of Ophir; for intercession is the key of the ivory palaces wherein are contained the boundless treasures of God. Saints in intercession reach a place where angels cannot stand. Those holy beings rejoice over penitent sinners, but we do not read of their being admitted as suppliants for the saints. Yet we, imperfect as we are, have this favour, we are permitted to open our mouth before the Lord for the sick and for the tried, for the troubled and for the downcast, with the assurance that whatsoever we shall ask in prayer believing we shall receive. In this thing great honour is put upon you.

Brethren, avail yourselves of his honor. I know very well if Her Majesty should give a permission to any one of you to call at the palace, and to ask what you would for your friends, you would not neglect the opportunity. Why, in these days, if a man thinks he has the ear of a member of Parliament, or somebody in power, it is not often that he neglects the opportunity of speaking for his cousin or his son who desires an office, where there is little to do and much to receive. All over the world place-hunters are in abundance, men of influence, having the ear of the authorities, are always pressed to make all possible use thereof. And yet, I have to stand here this morning and urge you, dear brethren, who have the ear of God, to exercise your choice prerogative. You have promises from God of the granting of your request, and many are saying, "I would be spoken for unto the king," pray be not slow to help. Use the liberty which your Prince has given you and plead for your brethren. If there be no other who needs your prayers, I eagerly ask for a place in them. "Brethren, pray for us," said an apostle, how much more may I say it. Having to minister daily in holy things, our responsibilities and needs are very great, do not, therefore, forget us when it is well with you. Say a kind thing unto the Prince for his servants and ask him to grant us more of his grace.

We will change the word now from honour to *excellence*. Intercessory prayer is a most excellent thing; for first, it benefits those who use it. I know you desire, beloved, to be of real service in the church of God. I trust we have no members of this church who are satisfied to have their names in the book, and to attend services, and to feel

that all is done when this is done. No, you wish to be really helpful and to bring glory to God. Well, then, I urge upon you for this end the excellence of intercessory prayer.

First, brethren, it will suggest to you to know your brethren. You cannot pray well for those you know nothing about. You will not, therefore, go in and out of the assembly not knowing the person who sits next to you in the pew, but you will enquire how the brethren fare, and, when you hear of any one being in distress of mind, or body, or estate, you will be ready to take notice of that, in order that you may offer prayer on his account, and then there will be in you a sympathetic knowledge of your brethren. Paul tells us to know them that labour among us and are over us in the Lord! and I wish all church members did know more of their pastor's struggles, and sorrows, and joys, that they might have more sympathy with him, and the same is true of the rest of the brethren; the more you know and sympathise the better will your prayer be, and because you will need to know, in order to intercede; therefore, I call intercession an excellent exercise.

Earnest intercession will be sure to bring love with it. I do not believe you can hate a man for whom you habitually pray. If you dislike any brother Christian, pray for him doubly, not only for his sake, but for your own, that you may be cured of prejudice and saved from all unkind feeling. Remember the old story of the man who waited on his pastor to tell him that he could not enjoy his preaching. The minister wisely said, "My dear brother, before we talk that matter over, let us pray together," and, after they had both prayed, the complainant found he had nothing to say except to confess that he himself had been very negligent in prayer for his pastor, and he laid his not profiting to that account. I ascribe want of brotherly love to the decline of intercessory prayer. Pray for one another earnestly, habitually, fervently, and you will knit your hearts together in love as the heart of one man. This is the cement of fair colours in which the stones of the church should be laid if they are to be compact together.

Dear brethren, when you pray for one another, not only will your sympathy and love grow, but you will have kinder judgments concerning one another. We always judge leniently those for whom we intercede. If a talebearer represents my brother in a very black light, my love makes me feel sure that he is mistaken. Did I not pray for him this morning, and how can I hear him condemned? If I am compelled to believe that he is guilty I am very sorry, but I will not be angry with him, but will pray the Lord to forgive and restore him, remembering myself also lest I be tempted. We think our children beautiful because they are our own, and have a place in our heart, and in the same way we are quick to perceive any admirable traits of character which may exist in those for whom we intercede; and we are willing to suggest extenuations for the failings of their dispositions. Prayer is a wondrous blender of hearts and a mighty creator of love.

Intercessory prayer is of much efficacy in fostering watchfulness. Suppose that you, as a member of this church, are brought into contact with backsliders and are led to seek their restoration, your prayers for their recovery will naturally lead you also to pray, "Lord, preserve me from this evil, keep me from backsliding, preserve me from becoming

cold and indifferent as these brethren have done." If we meet with professed Christians who have fallen into drunkenness, and are earnest in pleading with the Lord to rescue them from that horrible ditch, our own souls are made to loathe the sin and to stand upon its watch tower against it. If we perceive that two brethren have disagreed and cannot be brought into a state of peace, if we pray to God that unity may be restored between them, we are led also to ask that we may be of a gentle and quiet spirit, that we may not cause strife, and that if we have caused it at any time we may be prepared to confess the wrong and amend it. Thus the objects of our prayerful solicitude become beacons to us. If you observe others with captious eye, censure them eagerly, and go from house to house to spread the ill-savour industriously, your unhallowed course of action will breed self-righteouness in yourself; but, if you go to the Lord with sorrow about all misdeeds of brethren, and importunately seek the restoration of the erring, you will foster in your own heart tenderness of feeling and watchfulness against sin. Those who supplicate much for others will frequently find on their own lips the prayer, "Search me, O God, and try me, and know my ways, see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I cannot stay to tell you what other excellent things there are wrapped up in this exercise of intercession, but I am persuaded it is both one of the holiest, healthiest, and most heavenly exercises in which a devout man can possibly be occupied.

Do you not think, dear brethren, that if we were each one required upon the spot to give an account of his attention to this excellent duty, we should most of us need to be ashamed? May I venture to put the question to every Christian here, have *you* rendered to God and his church your fair proportion of intercessory prayer? We have not interceded too much, I am certain, for of this salt it may be said, "salt without prescribing how much." No man prays too much for his fellow-man. Have we prayed enough? I give you space, and make a pause, in which you may put the question. I will give you my own answer. I am clear as to my duty to this church in the matter of preaching, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If I could learn to preach better I would gladly do so. I am conscious of my failures, but I have served you heartily and faithfully before God in this pulpit. But I cannot say so of my intercessions. I have many confessions to make to God of shortcomings in that department, and I am afraid that a great number of my fellow-workers here must plead guilty to the same indictment. You have never missed your class on Sunday afternoon yet, you are always at your work in time, with the Scripture-lesson well studied; that is right, but, dear brother, do you always pray the lesson into your soul? Dear sister, have you made a habit of praying for the girls under your care, one by one, with intense fervour? I do not accuse, but I ask you to look into your own soul, for the fault is not a trivial one, but causes ourselves and the church no little damage. Elders and deacons of this church, are you clear in the matter of intercession? Some men among us may be without blame in this business, but I am afraid that the most of us have attended to other duties far beyond the proportion in which we have attended to

this. We have prayed in public at the prayer-meetings, and we have not forgotten supplication for the saints at the family altar, neither, I trust, is it unknown in our private devotions; but, still, if we had prayed for our brethren ten times as much, or even a hundred times as much, we should not have gone too far. We stand up sometimes on the public platform, and we charge the church of God with growing cold; let us ask ourselves the question, have we by our prayers added to her heat? Have we pleaded for her revival? We find fault with the Missionary Societies because such slender results are apparent. Do we pray for missions as we should? I hear a mournful complaint about the present and rising race of preachers: have we interceded for students, and for pastors, as we should? I hear people speak of Christians as either worldly, superficial or proud. Have you prayed them out of their worldliness and pride? May it not be that you would have done far better if you had prayed for them than found fault with them? Ay, and may not the errors you see in them be, in a considerable measure, traceable to the neglect of the office of intercession by yourself?

Oh, let us have done with murmurings and complainings, criticisms and finding fault, and take the whole of it up to the mercy-seat, for if half the breath that is vainly spent in censorious complaints were turned into intercession, there would be much more holiness in the church.

Now, I must come to the text again while I give you another word, that is *extent*. David says in the text, "Yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities;" and his meaning is this, if any of the saints of God should by their fidelity to his soul displease him, he would nevertheless pray for them. Brethren, we are not to confine our prayers to those who please us in their mode of addressing us, but we are to pray lovingly for those who are too sharp, too harsh, too cutting in their remarks. Suppose they should be so severe as to grieve our spirits, suppose their rebukes appear to be uncalled for, injurious and unjust, we are still bound to pray for them. David, in the text, seems to say that, let the righteous do what they might with him, he would still pray for them in their calamities; and I urge you, my brethren, if there be any member of this church who has treated you unkindly, revenge yourself upon him by loving him ten times more than ever you did, and praying for him more constantly and more earnestly. If some brother has crushed your spirit and wounded you, so that to think of him causes you pain, never mind, the best cure for the wound is to go to God in prayer and pour out your soul for him; ask the Lord to give him a great blessing and to make him a better Christian, to fill him full of divine love; and, then, when you see him improved, you will either come to think that you made a mistake in judging what he said, and took wrongly what he meant to do you good, or else you will find that he will come to you and will say, "I was in the wrong, my brother," or, if he does not confess that in words, he will by extra kindness to you acknowledge it in his deeds.

And, brethren, if ever we find a fellow-Christian in a calamity, then we are to pray for him doubly. Men of the world leave their companions when they get into trouble, as the herd leave the wounded deer. We have many friends when all goes well, we have very few when the evil

days are lowering. But, with Christians it should not be so, we should be faithful friends; we ought to be more kind to those who become poor than we are to others; and, if we meet with a fellow-Christian who has lost his comfort, and is desponding, though his society may not be very pleasant, but may even have a depressing influence upon ourselves, we should pray for him more, and try to lift him out of the Slough of Despond. Especially if a brother in Christ should be slandered we are bound to stand by him. Too many follow the bad habit of getting right out of the way of a man who is traduced. Somebody has thrown a handful of mud at a professed Christian: let us clear the coast, for the mud may light upon us too. So say cowards, but so say not we. No, brother, if you belong to the army of Immanuel, and our persecuted brother has done no wrong, let us stand or fall by him. Let us never desert a comrade. If the world says, "Down with him! down with him! down with him!" we will rush like the old Greek hero to the rescue, and hold our shield over the fallen one, fighting for him till he can get up again; for one of these days we may be down too, and we may want a brother soldier to cover us from the enemy. Let us pray our brethren out of their troubles and not desert them, and if that prayer should be long before it gets an answer, let us persevere in importunity, saying with David, "Yet my prayer shall be in their calamities."

I shall say no more upon this matter of intercession for the saints, but shall leave it before the eternal throne, and with your own consciences. I beseech you, unless ye be traitors to Christ, if ye be members of the true unity, if your souls are knit together by the Holy Ghost, wrestle much for one another, and do not let the covenant-angel go till a blessing shall come to the whole house of God, and thence flow into the world at large.

II. Now, secondly, the high office of intercession FOR SINNERS. Upon this I shall speak briefly, but, I trust, earnestly. As a church we have a crown, and for many years we have held it; but, I would use the language of Christ, in the Book of the Revelation, when speaking to one of the churches, he says, "Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Now, what has been our crown as a church? It has not been our wealth, for in that we do not excel. It has not been our learning, we do not make any show of it. It has not been our tasteful services, the beauty of our music, and the sweetness of our chanting. No, we do not care about such things, but cultivate simplicity. Our crown has been this one thing, that if there has been a church in Christendom which has given itself to winning souls, this church has done so. Our ministry has aimed always at this, the plucking of the brands from burning, the bringing of sinners out of darkness into marvellous light; and, I do you nothing but simple justice, my brethren, when I say, that by far the larger part of this church is really alive for soul-winning. It does my heart good to meet with divers knots of brethren among you who everywhere about this city are working away unostentatiously but successfully in bringing souls to Christ. I hope it always will be so. Hold fast, O church, what thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Let it always be our joy and glory that God gives us spiritual children, and souls are born to him.

Now, if we desire to do this, and I am sure we do, we must look more to intercession for the souls of the unconverted.

Pray first, for this is the most essential thing to do. What can you and I alone do in the conversion of a man? We cannot change his heart: we cannot put life into him—we might as well think to create a soul within the ribs of death. It is God's work to regenerate souls; What then? if I am to be his instrument in doing it, my very first action must be to fall on my knees and pray, "O God, work with me." You are going to your Sunday school this afternoon, or you are off to your street preaching; now, if *you* could do the work, I would not urge you to waste time in asking God to do what you could do alone, but, as you are utterly powerless to win a single soul to Jesus without the Spirit of God, let your first action be to pray, "O power divine, come and clothe me! O tongue of fire, be given to me; and sacred, rushing, mighty wind, come thou forth to breathe life upon dead souls!" Prayer is the most essential thing in turning sinners from the error of their ways.

Then, intercessory prayer will fit you for becoming God's instrument. If I pray for a person's conversion, especially if I single out some individual, then my heart gets warmed into love to that individual; as I think over his position and condition in prayer. Very well, that instructs me, and helps me to deal out the proper word to him when I come near to him. I am like a surgeon, who, coming to a case where he has to use the lancet, knows exactly where every bone is, and also what part has been injured. My prayer has given me a diagnosis of the man's state. I have looked it through and considered it in my petitions, and when I come practically to work upon him, I shall be wise by the Spirit of God to do the right thing, and in the right way. If we wished to send a man to college to make him a good helper to troubled hearts, we should send him to the college of all-prayer, for intercession is the mode to become wise in winning souls.

And, brethren, prayer will have this effect upon you, that you will go to work hopefully. It is a very horrible thing to think of persons being buried alive, put underground by their friends in their coffins while yet there was breath in their bodies. Let us mind that we never bury a soul alive;—I am afraid we are in the habit of doing it. We judge of such an one that he will never be converted, it is a case where all effort would be useless. We think of another person that he is so abandoned, we may very well give him up and attend to more hopeful cases. In all this we are wrong, since we have no right to sign a soul's death-warrant, or to say to the grace of God "hitherto canst thou come but no further." Believe that as long as a man lives in this world there are possibilities of grace for him. Take him in your arms before God in prayer, and when you begin to pray for him you will feel that there is hope, and you will afterwards converse with him in a hopeful and perhaps believing manner. I do not believe a man was ever saved by another one talking to him in a tone of despair, but the cheerful utterance of hopeful love wins its way. Believe that the hard heart may be broken, the blasphemer's tongue cleansed, the persecutor's mind changed, and that the rebel may yet obey Christ crucified, and become a bright star in the heaven of God. Dear brethren, I pray you then

since the power is of God, and since intercession will make you fit to be used by God, and since also it will give you great hopefulness with regard to those you deal with, exercise yourselves much more than ever in intercessory prayer.

This is a work in which all of you can aid. If I came to you this morning and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Lord's cause requires money," I know, from long experience, that you would do your best; but there are some who would be compelled to reply, "The necessities of my family do not permit my doing anything in that direction." But, when we ask for intercession, no Christian can say, "I cannot plead with God." If I were to press upon you at this moment the want of more public preaching, many of my congregation would be justly excused, for they are slow of speech and without gifts of utterance. But, O brethren and sisters, when it comes to interceding you can all fulfil the office, and by so doing you can have a share in all the great works of the church. I have heard of a holy woman who used to say, "I cannot preach but I can help my minister to do it by my prayers; therefore, whenever I see him come into the pulpit, I will pray that God will bless his word, and so I shall have a share in what he does." When you hear of a missionary working anywhere abroad pray for him, and then you will become his co-worker. Beloved, some of you are often sickly in body, and during the weary night you get but little sleep,—do you know why the Lord keeps you awake? It is that while others of us are sleeping you may be praying for us. God must have some to keep the night watches; he determines that a guard of prayer shall be set around his church all day and all night long,—you are the sentries of the night-watches. You cannot do anything else, but you can pray, and by praying you can obtain a share in the noblest works of the church.

Now mark, David by implication tells us that some of those we pray for may perhaps not care for our prayers, and they may come into great calamities through their sins; then is our time when we should be yet more earnest in intercession for them. If I have spoken to an ungodly man for many years, and he has ridiculed all I have said, then I will resolve within myself, "I will never leave off praying for him. Perhaps, one of these days I shall find him sick, and then he will ask for the prayers he now rejects. Perhaps, I shall find him with a broken heart, and then the words he now jests at will be very sweet to his taste." You who seek after souls must know how to keep up the chase: those who are short of breath in soul-winning will never be successful. Follow them up! follow them up! follow them to the gates of the grave. If they are not saved after twenty years of prayer, follow them up to the gates of hell! If they once pass those gates your prayers are unallowable and unavailing, but to the very verge of the infernal pit follow them, follow them with your prayers. If they will not hear you speak, they cannot prevent your praying. Do they jest at your exhortations? They cannot disturb you at your prayers, for they do not know when you offer them. Are they far away so that you cannot reach them? Your prayers can reach them; you can still bless them. Have they declared that they will never listen to you again, nor see your face? Never mind, God has a voice which they must hear—speak you to him, and he will make

them feel. Though they now treat you despitefully, rendering evil for your good, follow them, follow them, follow them with your prayers; never let them perish for want of your supplications.

The time may come when those who have been longest in yielding their hearts to Christ will repay us a thousand-fold for all the efforts and supplications we may put forth. I have sometimes seen a great sinner, when he is saved, become of as much use as twenty ordinary converts, for in proportion as he was hard to win, he has become useful when won. We do not expect that we shall get Sauls every day made into Pauls, but when it is so, then the church is rich indeed, for one Paul is worth a thousand ordinary believers. These deep sea pearls are precious. These difficult cases may turn out to be Pauls; therefore, be instant in season and out of season, praying for them till they be brought to Christ.

The one thing I want this morning is that my dear brothers and sisters in Christ should pledge themselves to be more importunate in prayer for sinners all around us. Like Abraham, a great city is before us, let us plead for it; like Moses, we dwell among a sinful people, let us stand in the gap for them. I charge every member of this church, by his fealty to God, if indeed he be not a liar in the profession that he has made, to pray importunately for the ungodly, that they may be brought to Jesus. Plead with Jehovah, plead; he loves your prayers; your intercessions are like the sweet incense upon the golden altar. Plead with him, and you shall live to see a reward for your pleadings in the conversion of the sons of men. Go home and make your children the special objects of this afternoon's cries; implore the Lord to save your husbands or your wives, your kinsfolk, and your nearest neighbours. Implore a blessing upon the seat-holders and hearers of this congregation who remain unregenerate; then take your streets, take the district in which you live, and entreat a gracious visitation—you shall never lack for persons to pray for, therefore, continue in supplication. It was but a few days ago I saw four husbands who were converted to God, but their wives were left outside the church, and those four brethren, probably all here this morning, met together in prayer for their wives' conversion, and on the first communion Sabbath of last month the four wives were brought in in answer to the prayers of the four husbands. Anything is possible, everything is possible to him that believeth. God help us to believe and to intercede, and then may he send his benediction, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Psalm cxli. and cxlii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A BRIGHT LIGHT IN DEEP SHADES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MAY 12TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." —Isaiah li. 1.

THE Israelites were commanded to remember all the way which the Lord their God had led them in the wilderness. That precept was not given without reason. The remembrance of God's mercy in the past is helpful to us in many ways. To look back upon our past condition and upon the manner in which God befriended us at such times as we were reduced to sore straits, will often prove salutary and bracing to our souls. For one thing, it tends to bring forth in us the meekness of wisdom. Should we become rich and increased in goods spiritually, it will humble us and keep us in our right place, if we remember that once we were naked, and poor, and miserable. Are we to-day rejoicing in the Lord, sitting down at our Father's table, enjoying the privileges of sonship?—it will prevent our being proud, if we recollect that not long ago we fain would have filled our belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and all in our rags and filth we were led to say, "I will arise, and go to my Father." Whenever, O child of God, thou becomest self-complacent through beholding the excellence of thy present estate, it will do thee good to remember what thou once wast, how thou hast now become what thou art, and to whom the glory of it is due; it will cool thy hot blood, calm thy feverish pulse, and constrain thee to bow in the dust of adoration before him to whom thy well-being, like thy being, exclusively is due. A recollection of the past also will be sure to excite our thankfulness. God's people are always happy when they are grateful. We should be ten times more full of bliss if we were proportionately more full of thankfulness. We bury God's mercies, and then sigh for his comforts. Did we recollect how near to death's dark door we once laid, and how the gates of hell were opened for us, and fain would have closed upon us for ever, we should bless that mighty arm which plucked us like brands from the burning, and adore that matchless atonement which has delivered us from going down into the pit

because a ransom has been found. If no other results came from a retrospect of our past condition, but humility and thankfulness, these would be sufficient to justify the prophet in bidding us look to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged.

But, in this particular instance, Isaiah had not in his mind's eye the cultivation either of humility or of gratitude. He was led by the Spirit of God to admonish the Israelites to look back for quite another reason, though one of equal importance. It was this, that they might be cheered and encouraged in a time of gloom and sadness, and that they might be animated with fresh confidence in God's power to bring them up again from their sad condition, as they thought of all that he had done for them in times past, when they were equally low, or when, peradventure, they were even in a worse plight than they were at present.

Give ear, then, beloved; hearken to this appeal, all ye that follow after righteousness. There is a cheerful view for you, if you will but look back; and brighter scenes will yet open up before you as you go forward. It is a great thing for people to be encouraged. Sometimes Satan makes the pendulum vibrate in one direction, and sometimes in another direction. If it swing this way, men become presumptuous in sin; or, if he make it swing that way, they become desponding as to the pardon of their sin and the renewal of their heart. Quite as many souls are ruined by the latter as by the former. I desire, this morning, so to speak that every one of you that follows after righteousness, and desires the Lord, may say, "There is hope for me, then; there is good cheer for me," and with his face turned towards his Father's house, may quicken his footsteps towards the place where pardon and love are awaiting him.

I. First, WE SHALL EXPOUND THE TEXT WITH GREAT BREVITY IN ITS APPLICATION TO ISRAEL LITERALLY. They are bidden to look back to the origin of their nation, in order that they may be comforted.

Abraham was the stock out of which the nation of Israel came. He was only one man. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you, for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." He was a single individual; his wife and himself made up but one family; one tent enclosed them; and yet the Lord said to him, "I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Yea, more, the Lord said to him, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting covenant." And God bade Abraham look towards heaven and count the stars, and he said, "So shall thy seed be." A progeny that should be like the sand upon the sea shore innumerable was assured to the patriarch and Sarah his wife. Moreover, the man was old, well stricken in years, and we read concerning him that his body was now dead—that is to say, he was too far advanced in years to be likely to become the progenitor of a race. As for his wife, she also, it is said, was barren, and yet from these two, who seemed the least likely of all flesh and blood, God was pleased to create a people countless as the stars. Abraham was not a man in a commanding position, with large armies at his feet, who could make a

show in the world. He was a dweller in tents, a Bedouin sheik, wandering through the plains of Palestine, yet was he never injured; for God had sent forth a secret mandate, which fell, though they knew it not, upon men's hearts, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;" and, though in many cases it seemed as if this embryo of a race might have been crushed, and become extinct, yet Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, must live on, they must survive, because God's promise was that he would make a great nation out of these few men and women. Now, the prophet turns to the Israelites, and he says, "You say God can never restore us, we have been thinned out by innumerable invasions, the sword of war hath slain the tribes, Judah and Israel can never rise again. But are there not more left of you than there were at first? There were but two, Abraham and Sarah, that bare you, and yet God made you a people. Can he not make you a people again? You are not lower now than you were then. You say that you are in poverty; true, but these your progenitors were not great in the earth. You say that you have no strength, that the men of valour have ceased, and that you are not skilful in the use of arms. Be it so, neither were your first ancestors expert in war; they were but few and feeble in the land, yet God preserved them, wrought great deliverances for them, and brought the country to great strength and power; and cannot he who did this for them do the same again for you, now that he promises to visit you and to restore you?

I think you see that the thoughts which would be awakened in the heart of a Jew by these reflections would be eminently consolatory. They ought to be consolatory to us now with regard to the Jewish people. They are scattered: behold them wandering on the face of the earth without a country of their own; they are a people who have been oppressed and downtrodden almost beyond belief: the hand of the heathen and the hand of the so-called Christian hath been very heavy upon them; they have been jeered and hooted at for ages, though they are in truth the very nobles of God, and their ancient lineage is like that of kings. Let us not, however, despair for them. Abraham, their father, was but a heathen when God called him out of a family that had worshipped the teraphs and made him to be a witness of the living and true God, and honoured his faith with exceeding great reward. Doubt not, then, that he can call Israel again from all her wanderings, cleanse her from all her profane traditions and her unbelief, and separate her unto himself to be a holy people, in whom once again his power shall be made known, and made known in such a way that they shall not speak of the ark of the Lord, or the redemption out of Egypt as the chief symbol of their national glory, or the grandest theme of their patriotic song, for a greater redemption and a greater manifestation of the Divine presence shall be in the midst of Israel than the wilderness of Sinai had ever known, or the mountains round about Jerusalem had ever witnessed. God grant it to them, and hasten the fulfilment of the promises. in which he has made us to hope. We are encouraged from the very origin of Israel to hope that great things shall yet be done for her.

II. But now, secondly, our text may be used in reference to the CONDITION OF THE CHURCH, THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE WORLD.

Let us look back to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence Christ's church was digged. We shall see great encouragement under present discouragements if we do so.

I know many of the people of God who scarcely dare look for brighter times, because they say the people of God are few. Nominal professors abound, but vital godliness, say they, where shall we find it? Behold, the faithful servants of the Most High are become like the gleanings of the grapes when the vintage is over. The spirit of Elias in some Christians, while it makes them very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, makes them very uncharitable towards his people, and they say, "I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Do I hear the bitter complaint of some brother who is afflicted with the belief that there are very few good and gracious people now; perhaps, he may have sound reasons for his apprehensions in the church with which he is connected, seeing that through many circumstances it may have been thinned and brought very low in numbers. My dear brother, hope thou in thy God, trust in Christ, cry mightily for the Spirit, work heartily for a revival, and have confidence in the power of the gospel, for was not the church very small at the first? It could all be contained in one upper room. Has it not been very small many times since then? Had you looked well all over the Continent of Europe and been able to read all men's hearts, how very few of the faithful would you have found in the days of Huss, or Jerome of Prague! Here and there a godly monk in his cell had found the Saviour, here and there simple-minded men and women had heard the good tidings of the cross, as it were by chance, and rejoiced therein. But the people of God were very scant, so few, a little child might count them, like the trees of the wood when the axe has passed through and through the forest. But did not the Lord strengthen his church in the apostolic times! How speedily did the 120 grow to 3,000! How soon had the 3,000 been scattered over the world and multiplied a hundredfold! How soon had all nations felt the growing power of the church! And, in the dark ages, how very speedily did the time of the singing of birds come? How sweetly was the voice of the turtle heard in our land, and in all lands! God had but to speak by his servant Luther, and brave men came to his side, and right soon his church sprang up. Though she be built of costly stones and hewn stones, and abideth for the ages, yet she sprang up as though she had been the offspring of a dream, and like the gourd which cometh up in a night, for the Lord was with her and he wrought marvellously. Look back, then, if discouraged with the fewness of God's people, to the rock whence the church was hewn.

But, is it possible, you say, while the church of God in these days possesses so few men of influence, so few of the nobility throughout the land? Those that follow after Christ are for the most part recruited from the poor or the middle classes. The men of literary repute, where are they? are they not opposed to the gospel? Men of station and of rank, do they not look down with contempt upon the followers of the simple faith of Christ? There are no kings, nor princes, nor great ones of the earth to hold the standard and unfurl the banner of the cross. But, dry your tears; ay; let them not even spring to your eyes, for this is small matter of regret; was it not said that it should be so of old?

Did not inspiration say, "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty have been called, but God hath chosen the poor of this world"? Do ye suppose that God has changed his plans, or that men's hearts have changed their bias? It will be so to the end of the chapter; nor must we expect otherwise; albeit, when the gospel spreads broadly and grows mightily, there will be more of all classes comprehended in it. Yet God looketh not to the greatness of men, neither shall the triumph of the gospel ever owe aught of its good speed to the prowess of man, the wealth of his intellect, the spell of his eloquence, or the multitude of his possessions. The Lord alone is to be exalted, and he will establish his right by multiplying his people from a class that shall not be able to claim eminence among the sons of men. Look then to the rock from whence ye were hewn, and ye will no longer sorrow for lack of men of great influence and high standing.

But alas, saith one, I see grave cause for sorrow, even for sorrow like the lamentation of Jeremiah at the gates of Jerusalem, for in these days many have departed from the faith, and truth lies in the streets bespattered. Alas, it is to be confessed that it is even so. False teaching is varnished with fair words; lies long exploded are brought into the church again; error is taught in our pulpits, covered over with new phrases; and heresies that were once slain have had a resurrection and are living among us. You see in one church popery rampant, popery maintained by men who eat the bread of a Protestant church; you see in another place every doctrine of our holy faith practically denied by men who occupy the pulpits of the old Puritans. We have fallen certainly upon evil days in this respect, nor do I think it would be possible for a man to be too censorious in the statement of this fact. The times are dark and ominous, and thick clouds are gathering: but for all this there is no room for fear; ay, there is no place for trembling. Put not thine hand upon the ark of the Lord, like Uzzah, for God will preserve it; it is safe in his keeping. Look back to the pit whence we have been digged.

There have been eras and epochs in which gross heresies spread a contagion through the entire church. The period at which Arianisim was so prominent comes at once to our recollection. That Christ was merely a man was almost the universal belief of Christendom. Only a few faithful ones maintained his Godhead at all hazards. But yet, to-day, where is Arianism? It has gone among the moles and the bats; the few that held the truth survived the deadly epidemic, and won the victory after all. God was with them, and in his name they became triumphant, and it will be so again. Error is like a hydra, as quickly as we cut off one of its heads another comes up in its place; but we must keep on killing till the last be slain. In the dark ages, Romanism was not only predominant, but it seemed to be and it really was all but universal: yet by the bright shining of his revealed word, did not God soon chase away the dense shades of ignorance and superstition? Once was the sound heard, "By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God," and the rolling thunder of that gospel sound shook the Vatican, and very soon its power over the nations had passed away never to be predominant again. So will it be again. Let

us not fear, we have the same God, we have the same gospel, we have the same Holy Spirit to make the gospel effectual against error—we may say, the virgin daughter of Zion hath shaken her head at thee, and laughed thee to scorn; for the Lord of Hosts is with her, the God of Jacob is her refuge, therefore shall she not fear.

Again, I hear the voice of lamentation from some brother who cries, "It is not merely that error spreads in the land, but the church is lukewarm in these times. Jesus does not seem to be loved as once he was. The heroic spirit, the martyr spirit, has departed from us. Christians seek to get gain, and wrap themselves up in garments of fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day. They are as earthly and as carnal as the rest of mankind. How is the fine gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed!" Here, again, the warmest advocate for the church must confess that the indictment is true. This is a lukewarm age. "I would thou wert either cold or hot," might be addressed to the churches of this day as justly as to the church of Laodicea. We will neither insist upon it, nor bring proofs about it, nor will we argue against it, but we will admit the charge just as the accuser brings it, and what then? Though I see much cause for our feeling grieved, still I see no cause for our being dispirited. The church has been in a like listless state before, and out of that languid condition God has roused her up and brought her forth. I am sure I need not unroll a page of history and ask you to glance your eye down it except for a second; for again and again you will see it has occurred that the church has fallen asleep, and her ministers have become as mute inglorious neuters, destitute of zeal, having no ardent passion, and giving themselves up to no arduous enterprise. But it is only needed once more for God to make bare his arm, and his church has been full of life and of power, renewing the vigour of youth, abounding in hope, and intrepid in courage. Must you have a modern instance? think of the days of Wesley and Whitefield. When they began to preach, gross darkness had covered this land. They did not appear to be the men who were likely to remove the veil that covered the nation, yet God used their very feebleness and eccentricity, he used everything about the men to be the means of restoring the church, reinforcing her ranks, and augmenting her energies. Therefore, be of good cheer; though the church should slip and slide again, and disgrace herself by her want of zeal, yet she is the spouse of Christ, and he will not divorce her, he will turn to her in mercy yet again.

There is a complaint made by some, and I fear there is some truth in it, that we have not many valiant ministers nowadays. Godly men will say, if we had a Luther that then we might hope; if anywhere within the horizon we could find a man like Howe or Baxter, then we might be of good courage. But where are the champions for the gospel now? We are a race of pigmies, say they, and the time of the giants has long since gone by. Perhaps so; it is likely enough; but, for all that, there have been periods in the church's history when she lacked for men of valour, and God has found them. Why should he not find them again? The apostles were certainly eminent, but their fame was, to a great extent, posthumous, they were not eminent in the judgment of their own generation. There seemed to be in the early church no

very remarkable person who was all on fire to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth, when one who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a persecutor of the church, a man of great learning, a man of mighty reasoning faculties, an extraordinary man, one of the greatest of men that God ever endowed with gifts, was summoned into the field of service. In a moment the Lord arrested that man, for he had need of him, and at the gates of Damascus he converted him by grace and called him to be an apostle; nor was he a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, and he became renowned among the sons of men for the brightness of the revelation he received, for the magnitude of the labour he performed, and for the intensity of the sufferings he endured. The Lord can work as extraordinary a miracle of grace at this very hour. If he willed it, he could take from amongst the cardinals a man who should preach Christ's gospel; he could find among the priests that now abhor him men that should be henceforth so full of faith and power that their adversaries could not resist the wisdom and spirit by which they speak; ay, and not from thence only, but in the slums of Whitechapel and the dark corners of the Seven Dials God could find a Paul and a Barnabas. From the very highest of the population, or from the lowest, whichever he willed, he could raise up men that should defend the truth, and carry the banner of the cross into the very heart of the foe. Let us not fear. He that made the earth, and man that is upon it, can make men for his church. There are live coals upon the altar still, and there are seraphs still to bring them to touch stammering lips, and say to men who hitherto had been silent, "Lo! this hath touched thy lips; go and preach the gospel in Jehovah's name, and the signs of his grace shall follow."

Brethren, I see nothing whatever to discourage us when I look back upon the past—I see the days of the present at once transmuted into signs of hope. I know there is much to deplore, but so there always has been. I know there are hills to be levelled, but levelled they shall be. I know there are valleys to be filled up, but filled up they shall be. I know there are crooked things, but they shall be made straight; and there are rough places, but they shall be made plain. If the gospel's progress were always smooth and easy, where were the glory of it? but, inasmuch as the church meets with opposition at her every step, this mighty maid that God has sent into the world armed from head to foot shall fight her way through the midst of all her enemies, and truth and righteousness her sisters shall go with her even to that throne that shall be set up above the hills, on which she shall reign as queen in the midst of the people.

III. I leave that point, because I am anxious to dwell upon another. OUR TEXT MAY BE VIEWED AS INSTRUCTIVE TO OURSELVES. Beloved brethren and sisters, our experience varies. Probably some of you may not be able to sympathise with an experience I am about to describe. I am sorry to say I am very cognisant of it, and I am afraid that there are many here who know as much about it as I do, perhaps more.

It sometimes happens to men who are truly saved and resting upon Christ, that they fall from the condition which they occupied when they were in their first love, and they get into a state of which I must give you

some particulars. They will say, "I have lost all enjoyment of religion. I could once sing for joy of heart in the precious love of Christ; when I went to the house of God the word was like music to my ears; when I bowed the knee in prayer it was delightful to speak with my heavenly Father.

'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still.'

But I do not enjoy these sacred exercises now. I follow after them. God forbid I should ever give them up. Still I am afraid there is very much that is mechanical in my devotion. Certainly I have not much inward peace. Alas, that I must confess it, my feelings seem to have become dull and blunt. At one time I wept if I thought I had sinned. The least touch of sin grieved me, I was like a sensitive plant, the very brush of evil I felt, but now, sir, I cannot feel. Oh, what would I give for the tenderness of years gone by! I sometimes think

'If aught is felt, 'tis only pain,
To think I cannot feel.'

I read the story of Christ's death without a tear, and I think of sinners perishing without the shudder that used to thrill every nerve of my body. At one time it would have broken my heart, but now I treat it as a matter of course. Not only is the joy gone, but other graces which were wont to bloom, now droop as if there were a blight among all the flowers in the garden of my soul." Such a one may say, "I do not doubt the faithfulness of God, but I am afraid I have no interest in it; I do not doubt the power of Jesus' precious blood to cleanse from sin, but I am afraid I never had any faith in that precious blood, and that I cannot be one of his disciples. I feel, oh, I cannot tell you how—it is like a dead calm in my spirit:—

'No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The ship was as still as a ship might be.'

And so is my soul, till it seems to be like the deep described in Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner':—

'The very deep did rot,'

Alas, that ever this should be! My soul seems in that awful calm, as though every good thing were rotting within her, and I cannot help myself." Well, dear friend, I want you to follow the counsel of my text, "Look to the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the pit whence ye were digged." I want you to look back to what you once were. Time was when you were all you are now, but you did not know the wretchedness thereof. You then loved sin, and the wages of it, and you found a pleasure in your evil pursuits. It is not so with you now. Then you were an enemy to God by wicked works, and far off from him. There were no heavings within your spirit, no desire for better things. Not only had you no feeling, but you did not want to have any feeling; you would rather not have had any, whereas now you would be glad enough if the Spirit of God would visit you again and rekindle the fire which has almost gone out. Why,

in those days, your sins had never been acknowledged nor confessed, and were not pardoned, they were heaped upon you then with all their aggravations; but you were brought by the precious power of grace to wash in the "fountain filled with blood." My dear brother, why cannot you be washed again? What reason is there why the Lord should not bring you a second time to himself and make you stand and weep again at the cross—weep for very joy, because your sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus, and were put to death in his death? Your state is bad, but it is not what it was. Oh, blessed be God, if I cannot feel, at least I want to feel; and if I cannot pray as I would, at any rate, I long to pray; and, if I cannot clasp Christ in my arms and say, "I have seen thy salvation," I may say I shall never be happy till I do; if I cannot every day sit at his table, yet I know I cannot feel at home anywhere else. If Jesus be not mine, yet will I never be content till he shall be mine, for I will seek him, and if I perish I will perish still crying to him, "God be merciful to me." Your present condition is not what your past one was, and yet the Lord visited you when in your lost estate. Beloved, there is the same God to-day as there was when first you sought him. Your Father did welcome you with abounding love when first you came to him confessing your sin. His heart is not hardened towards you, return to him, for he will receive you yet again. There is the same purpose in God's heart now as there was then. Then he resolved to save you, and he did. He never changes his resolve to save you. You are under the same covenant as you were, it was not a covenant of works but of pure grace. He loved you because he would love you, and he saved you not because there was any good in you, for there was none; and he will place you now upon the same terms, he will receive you graciously and love you freely, for his anger is turned away from you. There is the same Saviour to-day as there was then. Jesus revealed himself to you as having bled in your stead; his blood has not lost its efficacy, neither hath he cast away the people whom he has redeemed. And remember there is the same Spirit now that there was then. It melted you then, it can melt you now; it wounded you then, it can wound you now; it healed you then, it can heal you now. The Spirit has not lost his might nor lost his love. He still can work upon you according to the wonders of his grace. "If," says the apostle, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If the enemy was brought in shall not the child be kept in? If when I had no thought of God he had thought of me, will he not think of me now? If when I strove against his grace he constrained me with his sweet attractions, will he not visit me now? If I feel dead to-day, yet when I was dead as the dry bones of the valley years ago, the breath of his Spirit came upon me and made me to live, why should I dispute the power, the grace of my Heavenly Father? My dear brethren and sisters, when the Lord first looked upon you in love, and you had not even a trace of any goodness in you, was not it all grace? Did not he deal with you just on this footing—"I mean to save this undeserving wretch just because I will, and for no other reason"? Will you listen to me for one minute? God will deal with you to-day just

as he dealt with you the first day. You fancy that you have got under a covenant of works, some of you. You think the Lord will not love you except you are faithful. The old Hagar covenant, which gendereth bondage is enthralling you. The fact is, he did not see anything good in you at first, and he does not discern any merit in you now. That has nothing to do with his eternal purpose to save you; he saves you because he will do it; because he will love you he loves you, and not for anything else. If I thought the Lord only loved me because he saw some beauty in me, I should know it was only he who had put it there, and I should fear that it would fade in an hour or two, and then he would despise my image. But, when I know that he has chosen us in Christ Jesus, and that the beauty he sees in us is the beauty of Christ, and not any natural charm of our own, then I see his love stands on a stable foundation that cannot be shaken, even the covenant of grace, which will stand when yon sky and this poor earth shall both have gone. The Lord our God will rest in his love, because he loves us on the blessed terms of his own will and his own grace.

When the Lord first saved you was there anything in you to help or assist? A poor man once told his minister that the Holy Spirit did much for him and he did the rest. "And pray what did you do," said the minister? "Why," said he, "the Holy Spirit did it all, and I stood in his way, that was all I did." And I can truly say, that was all I could do in my own salvation; he did it all from first to last, there was nothing in me to help him. Suppose there is nothing in me to help now, even then I am not in a worse plight than then I was, and so, as I look to the hole of the pit whence I was digged, my soul takes comfort; it was a dead lift then, it is a dead lift now. Grace had to do it all then and grace must do it all now; and, if the eternal and ever-blessed God could save a dead sinner, a hateful sinner, a hard-hearted, loathesome sinner that despised Christ, and could bring him to the foot of the cross, why, then, blessed be his name, it can save him now that he stands at the same hallowed spot, and says, "Jesus, my all, I trust in thee." There is much comfort to be had in looking to the rock whence we were hewn.

IV. But now, to close, I think OUR TEXT MAY BE FITTINGLY USED TO ENCOURAGE OUR HOPE FOR OTHERS. I thank God that I have a working church about me, and that the most of you are engaged in soul-winning. Brethren, this afternoon launch into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. Let not this day pass over your heads till you have lovingly sought to introduce to the Saviour some one who has been a stranger to him. Suffer not any thoughts about the character of the person you are brought in contact with to damp your ardour. Do you say of some sinner, "I am afraid his is a hopeless case." My dear brother, look unto the rock whence *you* were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Where is that sinner? I will tell you. He is where the whole race is naturally. What sort of a sinner is he? I have his likeness drawn here; if you like to turn to Romans iii., you will see the photograph of the man you are intended to bless, "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no,

not one." That poor sinner is where all other sinners are. He is without any goodness; the imagination of the thoughts of his heart are evil, only evil, and that continually, and there is nothing in the individual that you are sent to this afternoon that is at all unusual; he is just in the same fall where our father Adam left him; he was born in the same corruption, there is the same evil in his heart, no more, no less, and therefore you must go to him with that upon your mind. Recollect, too, that the sinner is where you were. You look down and see him in a horrible pit; it looks a long way down, and the pit is full of mud and mire and dirt; he is not deeper down than you were—at least the sinner who is further gone than I was, must be an extraordinary one. Though not in outward actions, yet in my inward soul I was as far from God as a man could be not to be actually in hell; and yet his grace has brought me nigh. Since the Lord saved me I never despair of anybody; and I think there are some of you who in your olden times, before you knew the Lord, were perhaps given to actual vice and sin, and have been reclaimed, and I am sure when you go out to talk to sinners that are now what you were, you may very well feel, "The Lord that saved me can save them; the gospel that came with power to my soul can come with power to their souls, and therefore will I go to them remembering the hole of the pit whence I was digged, and feel encouraged concerning them."

Remember again, that that poor sinner whose soul you are going to seek this afternoon is where the best and brightest of the saints were. Peter was there, Paul was there; they were all in the same condemnation. By nature they were all heirs of wrath such as that sinner is. In all the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of the martyrs, and the goodly fellowship of the prophets, there is never one that was not born in sin as that sinner is, and prone to break God's laws, and all alike needed the eternal power and Godhead of Christ to put forth all its strength, or else none of them would have been saved.

And, recollect, that that sinner you are going to speak with this afternoon, perhaps a child in your class, perhaps a drunkard in the street, is, to-day, where those that are in heaven once were. Their robes are white, but they washed them in the blood of the Lamb; they are without fault, but they were once under condemnation. There is nothing to prevent the Lord taking the drunkard, the blasphemer, the adulterer, ay, and the murderer, and washing such in the fountain that is open for sin and uncleanness, and robing them in the immaculate garment, and making them to take their place amongst the host of the blessed, at the right hand of the eternal throne. Be of good comfort, and if you ever do despair of any, look to the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged.

Of all the saints that ever were saved there was nothing in their human nature, physical or mental, that aided their salvation—nothing. Some of them were more moral than others, but their whole head was sick and their whole heart faint; they were all lost, utterly lost, utterly undone. It was the work of the Spirit in every case and of the Spirit alone. But, on the other hand, in the case of no soul has there ever been found any evil power which has absolutely been able to defeat the Spirit of God when he has put forth his omnipotence. It

is impossible to conceive of anything that can resist the Spirit of God when he operates on the heart with purpose and with power. His ordinary ministrations are resisted, and effectually too; but when he puts forth his might to quicken the dead, in that regenerating operation he works like a God, and what is there that can stand against him? In the case of every soul that was saved, God's alone revealed motive was his grace; he saved the man not because he deserved it, not because it would be any advantage to God to save him, but simply because he delighteth in mercy, and he has put it on record, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Now, in bad cases, there is the same room for divine grace, and when the man is deeply sunk in sin, it will glorify the mercy of God all the more to save him; and, therefore, I would rather expect that man to be saved than gather from his sin that he was unlikely to be blessed of God. I would go with confidence to the chief of sinners if I knew him, preach to him the Saviour, Christ the Lord, and bid him look to him, and I would hope that God would bless that word to him none the less because he had become so sodden in sin and so rank in corruption.

Brethren and sisters, I am sure it will be a great help to you in working for God at any time, if you keep in recollection what the Lord has done for you. Have it fresh on your own mind. Oh, we never teach so well as when we teach from the heart; we never preach so well as when we preach about what we ourselves have experienced, dipping every word in gratitude to God for what we have known and received from him. I have heard of a lady who on one occasion was out in the street walking. The frost was severe, the snow was deep, and she felt so keenly for the poor that she resolved that when she got home she would write a cheque and have the money distributed to provide them with food and fuel. After a short time she reached her home, and sat down by the fireside, and she felt so extremely warm and comfortable, that she thought after all it would be a pity to waste money on the poor, for she had no doubt whatever if they kept by the fire the cold was not so severe as she had imagined. Now, there are some of us who have got to be very comfortable in our religion: we sit down in it; it would be a great mercy for us, and probably a mercy for thousands of others, if we were made to go out and feel the old discomfort, and to know once again what we were and where we were before the Lord brought us into the house of his mercy, and sat us down before the fire of his love. Oh, it is a dreadful thing because one feels happy himself to have no care for the souls of others. I earnestly pray you to live to-day as if you were only saved to-day, to go and try to bring others to Christ, as if your own conversion had only been accomplished five minutes before, with the blood fresh upon you, just fallen warm from those dear wounds, with the sin just gone, and your soul astonished at the miraculous change wrought in you, with the love of God just newly shed abroad in your own soul, in all the freshness of new-found love, and all the recollection of the sorrow and the sin from which you have just escaped. Oh, if you went so, God would bless you, and many souls would be saved to the praise of the glory of his grace. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOLDEN VIALS FULL OF ODOURS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 19TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."—Revelation v. 8

I SHOULD not have addressed you upon the subject of intercession to-day if this week had not been set apart for general prayer; for it is only a very few Sabbaths ago that I endeavoured to set before you the duty and privilege of intercession. However, as our mind is now directed to it again, it may be that the line upon line, the precept upon precept, the here a little and there a little, may not be without benefit to us.

The vision before us is a very remarkable one. We do not intend, for we have not the time, to go into all the details of it. No doubt it is a vision referring to some special occasion, but at the same time we may regard it as descriptive of the usual worship which is offered before the throne of God and the Lamb. We have sometimes in continental galleries seen a mediæval painting representing the assembly of the great council of the ancient German Empire. There is the emperor surrounded by the various kings, princes, electors, dukes, and counts; yonder are the knights of the Golden Fleece; there are the bishops and the cardinals, the barons, knights, and burghers of various degrees making up a marvellous spectacle of pomp and pageantry. If we made minute enquiries we should, perhaps, discover the one particular Diet which the picture represented, but even without such investigation the painting is instructive. We know that if it represents the Diet on one occasion, the one might stand for all. And so in the great assembly of heaven, the outline which the seer of Patmos gives us here may, if we wish to be very accurate, be referred to some one particular event; but it will suffice for us to believe that it represents in general the homage which is rendered at the throne of the Eternal.

In considering the brilliant scene before us, note carefully that the worship described is not confined to the occupants of heaven's immediate courts. Moses Stuart, believing that we have here an entirely celestial scene, concludes that these "golden vials full of odours, which

are the prayers of saints," represent the intercessions of glorified spirits; and makes the remark that the saints in heaven still continue to pray. To this last statement I do not demur, for in the sixth chapter the souls under the altar are said to cry for vengeance, and I see no reason why the perfect saints above should not pray; but I very greatly question whether we can draw that inference from this particular passage, for the prayers here intended are not those of heaven only, since from the thirteenth verse we are taught that the scene represents the adoration of the Lamb by the entire universe. "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." The presence angels lead the strain, the saints made perfect join the rapturous hallelujah, and then ten thousand times ten thousand angels swell the growing strain. Meanwhile, from every starry orb comes up its note of worship, the firmament rings with music. Earth from afar has heard the sound, and wakens all her life to take its part in the harmony; the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea; the songsters of the wood, and the monsters of the deep render with zeal their tribute of grateful praise. 'Tis not the inner circle alone which thus resounds Jehovah's praise, but widening and widening, the praise encompasses all space, and fills immensity. Not heaven alone, but all creation yields the Lord his praise.

Now, dear brethren, let us by faith pass into the inner circle, draw near to the throne, and gaze upon the golden vials full of odours, for with these we have to do this morning. It is probably known to all of you that the idea conveyed to us, by "golden vials," is as far removed from the meaning of the Greek word as well could be, for a vial is to us generally a deep but narrow vessel, but the vessel here meant is both shallow and broad. A better rendering would be "golden bowls," or "golden goblets full of odours" or "full of incense, which are the prayers of saints." The idea is that each one of the twenty-four elders bears an open bowl or censer filled with smoking incense, which pours forth a sweet perfume before the Lord, and this is the symbol of the supplications of the people of God.

Leaving the figure, the thoughts before us are just these. *The prayers of God's people are sweet as incense to him:* secondly, *their blended prayers are peculiarly acceptable in his sight;* and, therefore, thirdly, *let us unite our supplications with the general prayer.*

I. THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE AS SWEET TO HIM AS INCENSE. This is not due to any natural excellence or merit which they possess in themselves and by themselves. Far from it. In the best prayer that was ever offered by the holiest man that ever lived, there was enough of sin to render it a polluted thing if the Lord had looked upon it by itself. When we approach nearest to the throne of grace, we still fall very far short of being where and what we ought to be. The sins of our holy things are alone enough to condemn us. We often come before God in prayer unfit to pray, and spoil the action in the very outset by unpreparedness of heart. At other times, when we are in the midst of devotion, when we are being upborne upon the wings of zeal, pride will

intrude, and we congratulate ourselves upon the excellence of our worship. Alas! one dash of that spirit mars all: it is the Pharisaic spirit, and is the bane of devotion. At other times, just as our supplication is closing, we are assailed with suspicions as to the faithfulness of God, doubts as to the success of our pleas, or else some other unhallowed thought pollutes the sacrifice. Alas! how hard it is to begin, continue, and end a prayer in the Spirit. If any one of our prayers were put into the scales of the sanctuary alone, and of itself, the only verdict upon it must be, it is weighed in the balances and found wanting. No, my brethren, the prayers of the saints of themselves considered would rather be an offence unto divine holiness than a sweet savour unto God. Our consolation lies in this that our beloved intercessor who stands before God for us, even Christ Jesus, possesses such an abundance of precious merit that he puts fragrance into our supplications and imparts a delicious odour to our prayers. He makes our intercessions to be through his merit what they could not have been without it, acceptable before the Majesty of heaven. I think it is Ambrose who uses a very pretty figure concerning believers' prayers. He says we are like little children who run into the garden to gather flowers to please their father, but we are so ignorant and childish that we pluck as many weeds as flowers, and some of them very noxious, and we would carry this strange mixture in our hands, thinking that such base weeds would be acceptable to him. The mother meets the child at the door, and she says to it, "Little one, thou knowest not what thou hast gathered;" she unbinds this mixture and takes from it all the weeds and leaves only the sweet flowers, and then she takes other flowers sweeter than those which the child has plucked, and inserts them instead of the weeds, and then puts back the perfect posy into the child's hand, and it runs therewith to its father. Jesus Christ in more than motherly tenderness thus deals with our supplications. If we could see one of our prayers after Christ Jesus has amended it, we should scarce know it again. He has such skill that even our good flowers grow fairer in his hand; we clumsily tied them into a bundle, but he arranges them into a fair bouquet, where each beauty enhances the charm of its neighbour. If I could see my prayer after the Lord has prayed it, I should miss so much, and I should find so much there that was none of mine, that I am sure its fullest acceptance with God would not cause me a moment's pride, but rather make me blush with grateful humility before him whose boundless sweetness lent to me and my poor prayer a sweetness not our own. So then, though the prayers of God's saints are as precious incense, they would never be a sweet smell unto God, were it not that they are accepted in the beloved.

Note well, that true, acceptable intercession must be composed of the prayers *of saints*. "Golden goblets full of the prayers of saints." Nothing is here said of the prayers of officials, hirelings, and functionaries. It is thought by some churches most important that there should be kept up daily a repetition of certain words and sounds. This is not done by persons selected for their eminent spirituality or prevalence in prayer, but by officials whose appointment is arranged on very different principles. These persons are not qualified for the function in their ordinary dress, but derive some mystic qualification from garments more or less

savouring of the bleaching and starch of the laundry. Then, having certain words before them, they have nothing to do but with appointed bowings and scrapings to go through them, and in going through them they believe they have offered unto God acceptable prayer. I have always been expecting to hear that before long praying to God would come to be managed by machinery. Our friends have for a considerable time praised God in that way, and a little inventiveness might surely arrange the same for prayer. There is scarcely now a place of worship dedicated to Christian worship, but what the most of the praise to God is done by an organisation of wind and pedals; sometimes with the addition of electricity, and doubtless it is quite as consistent, and I believe quite as acceptable to God too, that we commence to pray by wind, or water, or fire, or magnetism, or, better still, by steam. I cannot see why what is done in many cathedrals and churches by machines which eat bread and meat, could not equally be well done by engines consuming coals and coke. The making of sounds is a mechanical business, and needs only a little attention, and we might soon have a whole service performed by figures filled with clock-work. There is a certain note of the organ called *vox humana*, which certainly is amazingly like the human voice, and as long as you have no need of heart and soul, it cannot matter much whether the sound is made by the *vox humana* of an organ, or the real *vox humana*. The fact is, vocal prayers are nothing in themselves, whether they be said or sung, whether they be read or intoned; it is the heart which alone prays acceptably. I cannot believe in a God who finds any satisfaction in the Ritualistic services which I have witnessed. I have asked myself, "What kind of a being must he be who could find pleasure in this sort of thing?" Thought is disgusted, reason sickened, intellect provoked, contemplation annoyed, only a florid taste and a childish love of display are gratified. The God of these Popish ceremonialists must surely be a huge, almighty doll-loving baby; but certainly not an intelligent being, such as Scripture reveals to us in the God that made heaven and earth. Alas, the frivolous sons of men imagine, because they go to their operas and listen to sweet music, and because in their drawing rooms they delight in the perfume which they scatter from their handkerchiefs, and because they are pleased to array themselves in silk and satin and the like, that God is like themselves, and is pleased with chants, and robes, and incense. Truly, the God they make is like themselves. They know not the Lord, the ever blessed. If he would be adored with glittering blue, look at the azure of the sky, or the deep blue of the sea; if he would be worshipped with lamps and candles, behold yon stars, and sun, and moon; if he would be reverenced with music, hark how the thunder rolls like drums in his awful march. Is the Infinite mind to be worshipped by vain shews? O ye sons of earth, will ye thus worship him that rideth on the heavens, before whom ye all are but as grasshoppers? The prayers which the Lord accepts are not the chantings of functionaries, the litanies of priests, or the devout tones of a mechanical service; they must be the prayers of saints: in the life, the character, the soul, the sweetness lies—the acceptance comes not unless they be the prayers of saints. And who are the saints? They are men whom the Lord has made holy by the power of his Spirit, whose nature he has purified, whom he

has washed in the precious blood of Jesus, and so sanctified unto himself, whom he has filled with his Spirit, and so set apart to his worship. These persons loving him, praising him, bowing before him with solemn awe, lifting their whole souls up in adoring love—these are they who can offer sweet incense; their thoughts, their desires, their longings, their confessions, their pleadings, their praises—these are sweet to God: this is music to him, this is perfume to his heart, delightful to his infinite mind, pleasant to his sacred spirit, for God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, and after no other fashion is a spiritual God to be worshipped.

Then, in the matter of intercession, one of the most important things is the character of the person. If I live in constant sin, and then go and say, "Our Father, which art in heaven," surely I might feel his hand closing my mouth, while I heard him say, "How canst thou speak so? How darest thou say 'Hallowed be thy name,' when thou dost constantly defile it? How canst thou say 'Thy kingdom come,' when thou wilt not submit to my rule, nor yield allegiance to my government? How darest thou mutter out before me the words 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,' when thou rebellest against my will, and settest up thine own will instead of mine?" Such prayers, what would they be but an insult to heaven, instead of sweet perfume offered before the Most High! Ay, and note too, my brethren—and I would note it myself with deep solemnity—that even where the man who presents intercessory prayer is a child of God, yet, unless he maintains, in the power of God's Spirit, his character as a saint, he will not preserve the prevalence of his prayers; for, though our heavenly Father does not hear our prayers because of any merit in us, yet it is written, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." If we turn aside from the Lord's commands we shall lose power in prayer, and our petitions will cease to bring down answers of peace. It is certain that every child of God who has watched it will know, that there is nothing which so weakens prayer as sin, and that to be a man like Elias, who can prevail with God upon Carmel, you must walk in the Lord's ways, for if you walk contrary to him he will walk contrary to you. In the golden bowls the sweet incense is not the prayers of hypocrites or formalists, but the prayers of saints. We must, by the Spirit's power, maintain the saintly character; we must walk apart from worldliness and covetousness; we must put aside uncleanness, anger, wrath, and every evil thing, or else we shall not be able to present unto the Lord such sweet odours as his soul delighteth in.

Note next, that these prayers must be *compounded of precious graces*; for they are compared to incense, and, as you know, the incense used in the temple was made up of divers sweet spices, compounded "according to the work of the apothecary." Stacte and onycha, and galbanum were mixed with pure frankincense, tempered together and beaten small. Now, in prayer, that which is sweet to God is not the words used, though they ought to be appropriate, and care should be taken with the language, which is as the golden bowl; but the sweetness lies not in anything perceptible to the outward senses, but in secret qualities, comparable to the essence and aroma of sweet spices. In the

incense there lies a subtle and almost spiritual essence which is fetched forth from it by the burning coals which causes the latent sweetness to spread itself abroad till all around confesses its power. So it is in prayer. Beloved brethren, our prayers may be very comely in appearance, and, if printed, might read most correctly and appear to be the very paragon of devotion, but unless there is a secret spiritual force in them they are vain things. We must speak to God believing that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Faith must be a part of the savour of prayer. Now, I am not able to tell when I hear a brother pray whether he prays in faith or not, any more than I might, with my eye, be able to tell whether what is presented to me as incense has in it the proper pungency; but God perceives the faith or the absence of it, and the prayer is received or rejected as the case may be.

So, too, in prayer there must be the true frankincense of love. How can I pray as a child to a father whom I do not love? If my heart be cold towards God my prayer will be frozen to death. There is need, moreover, of the grace of humility to be mixed, like precious stacte, with the other ingredients, for he who does not pray humbly will be no more justified than the Pharisee. There was much of this precious spice in the publican's prayer, when he dared not lift so much as his eyes towards heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Much of this ought to lie in every prayer.

But, I cannot stay to tell you what all the separate spices ought to be which are needful to make up the incense of an acceptable prayer; only let me remind you, that the incense of the temple was mingled "according to the art of the apothecary." Let us bless God that the Holy Ghost is the believer's apothecary. He it is who knows the proper quantity of each ingredient in prayer; how much of faith, how much of love, how much of repentance, how much of humility, there ought to be in every supplication. He helps each believer's infirmities, and makes for us a mixture of all choice graces, so that when we pray our pleadings are accepted as sweet incense, because they contain an harmonious amalgamation of all the things which are sweet to the Lord God of Sabaoth.

In passing onward, let us observe that this incense, in order to be accepted before God, *must burn*. It might be the best incense in the world, and well compounded, and put into the golden goblets, but it was never accepted by God till it was set on a blaze. Live coals must be taken from off the altar, and applied to the spices, and then the clouds of the sweet smoke began to rise up towards heaven. Ah! brethren, herein many men's prayers fail. They are correct but cold, excellent but lifeless, they lack life, vigour, earnestness, fire. Some make up for this deficiency by noise and wild-fire, but it will not do; the Holy Spirit alone can give us true fervour. I confess that I have too often prayed in this pulpit, and have not used the holy violence which wins with heaven; and, in our prayer-meetings, I have heard excellent supplications which have failed only in this, that the living fire had never touched them. How often in the family we go through the usual petitions, praying for ourselves, and for the Church of God, and for the heathen, and so on, and then we go our way. We knelt down

mechanically, and we continued there mechanically, and we rose up mechanically, and though the prayer was extemporaneous, yet I fear there is no more heart in it than if we had read it from a book. Remember well this truth, that neither extemporaneous prayer nor any other is of any use unless holy fire consume it. The live coals we must have. I have heard prayers made up of broken, fragmentary, ill-assorted sentences, but the man who presented them has been all alive, and I have blessed God and felt I could say, "Amen, amen, the Lord hear that brother's petition." Beloved, have you not gone to your closet and felt, "I have only one thing upon my mind, but oh, how heavily that weighs upon me! I could not construct an elaborate prayer if it were to save my life, for I am so distressed about that one thing;" but then, that one petition has poured forth from you with all your soul, and you have been heard concerning it. The Lord teach us to pray in earnest. May he send upon the continent of Europe, and upon America, and upon all the world at this time his own fire and the heavenly flame of his Spirit, the spirit of grace and of supplication, that saints may know how to pray, for we must have the fire with the incense.

Then the fire being with the incense, it was necessary for acceptance that *it should ascend*. If the wind had blown the smoke of the incense downward, scattering it to the right and to the left, it would have been an ill omen; but the incense was accepted with God, as it went straight up into the air, mounting till it seemed to join the clouds and lose itself. Brethren, our intercessions when they are sweet to God go straight up to him. Do your prayers always do that? Have you never prayed thinking, "Well, that is a very nice expression which I have used, my learned brethren will be pleased with that; my spiritual friends will be able to join in that; and they will think, 'What a spiritual man he is to pray as he is doing now.'" Ah, my brother, the smoke is blowing down, you see, blowing away towards man's nostrils, and not towards God. So much waste and only waste! The prayer which God accepts is offered to him alone. He who presents it cares not one atom who likes it or who does not like it; he is talking with his God, he is pleading with the Majesty unseen; he is very careless of the criticism of his fellow-creature; his only desire is to please the Lord. The prayers of the churches will never be accepted before God until they go straight up to him only, having respect to him who is invisible.

Now, the question returns, why are the prayers of saints so sweet to God? We reply, partly because they are the work of the Spirit of God. There is no acceptable prayer in the world but that which the Spirit of God has inspired. The Holy Ghost knows what the mind of God is, and he writes it upon the minds of God's people, "making intercession in the saints according to the will of God." Now, when God sees his own will reflected in the bosoms of his own children, he cannot but accept the work of his own Spirit.

The prayers of his saints are acceptable with him also because they are the pleadings of his Son. The saints are members of Christ's body, and, as they plead, Christ pleads in them. The very strength of their pleading lies in this, that they urge his merits, and the Lord delights to

be reminded of his Son's excellences; it is a theme that his soul delighteth in. You may ring that bell as long as ever you will: the Father will never weary of it. Tell him what his Son has done. Remind him of Gethsemane; bring up before the Father's mind the cross of Calvary; tell him of his promise to his Son, that he shall see his seed and have a full reward. You cannot by any possibility displease God by dwelling upon this topic. Hold him with it, yea, hold him with the resolution of a Jacob, and say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me, for I plead the name and merit of thine only-begotten Son." Everything about Christ is sweet to God, and because believers' prayers are full of Christ therefore are they sweet to God.

And, again, the prayers of the saints are sweet to God because they honour himself, and this they do in many ways: and first, they assert his existence. In prayer the people of God declare better than they could by any other means their sure belief that God is, for should we pray to One who has no existence? Our prayer to God, therefore, is our continual assertion that "The Lord he is God," "The Lord he is God." Our asking for special and particular mercies, and expecting them, is a declaration of our belief in a living God, a conscious God, an acting God, a God who is not asleep and far away, but who is near at hand listening to human voices and able to fulfil human desires. This, then, is very agreeable to God that we should believe and testify that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

What if I were to say that prayer is in itself essentially a doxology? It is an utterance of glory to God in his attributes. Do I ask him to bless me? Then I adore his power, for I believe he can. Do I ask him to bless me? Then I adore his mercy, for I trust and hope he will. Do I ask him to bless me because of such and such a promise? Then I adore his faithfulness, for I evidently believe that he is truthful and will do as he has said. Do I ask him to bless me not according to my request, but according to his own wisdom? Then I adore his wisdom; I am evidently believing in his prudence and judgment. I say to him, "Not my will but thine be done," I am adoring his sovereignty. When I confess that I deserve to suffer beneath his hand, I reverence his justice. When I acknowledge that he doeth right evermore, I adore his holiness; and, when I humbly say, "Nevertheless, deal graciously with thy servant and blot out my transgressions," I am reverencing his grace. We do not wonder, therefore, that through Jesus Christ the prayers of the saints should be precious to God, since they are a homage to the Supreme of an eminently practical kind.

Brethren, after all, perhaps the best reason we can ever give why God loves to hear us pray, is one which comes home to our own hearts. You love to hear your own little children's talk. Now you know very well when your little girl wants a new dress, and you are well aware that your little boy needs fresh school books, there is no necessity whatever that Mary should inform you about her clothes, or that Master John should tell you about his books; for you know what they had need of long before they ask you: but you like them to feel their wants and to recognise that they are supplied by their father; and, therefore, you like to hear them express their desires. Sometimes you

will stop a bit and say, "No, why should I give you this?" You set set them a pleading, because you like to hear their little prattling voices, and to have them put their little arms around your neck and overcome you with kisses. You let them believe that they master you with their pretty reasonings and fond embraces, and it is pleasant to you as well as to them. Now, our heavenly Father is far above us, and yets he bids us learn his character from our own feelings as parents. If we being evil know how to give good gifts unto our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. The Lord declares that he dealeth with us as with sons; I know the next word is, "For what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?" but I do not believe that God's likeness to a father is limited to his chastening. The text cannot be so cross and crabbed as that. Oh no, there is a likeness to a father in his hearing our cries. He loves communion with his people. The Lord loves to have the hearts of his children talk to him; he delights to hear them spread out their wants before him and order their case with arguments and prevail with them. Oh, then, never be slack in your pleadings which are pleasant to God as fragrant incense.

II. Now, secondly and briefly, BLENDED PRAYERS ARE PECULIARLY ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. "*The prayers of saints.*" The prayers of *a* saint are sweet, but the prayers of saints are sweeter. I had many points here, but I think I must needs forego them all this morning for the sake of one. United prayers possess the power of harmony. In music there is melody in any one distinct note; but we have all recognised a peculiar charm in harmony. Now, the prayers of one saint are to God melody, but the intercessions of many are harmony, and to God there is much that is pleasing in the harmony of his people's prayers.

Let us turn the subject over a minute. No two children of God pray exactly alike. There is a difference of tone. If taught of God each one will pray graciously, but there will be in one prayer what there is not in another. If all the fruits of the garden be luscious, yet each one has its own special flavour. All the bells may be of silver, and yet each one will have its own tone. For instance, some brethren when they pray dwell very tenderly upon the dishonour done to God by sin; they pray as if they would break their hearts and weep at every other sentence. "O God, the idols are placed on thy throne; Jesus is dishonoured, the law is broken, the gospel is despised." Such loving contrition for the sin of others wails itself out in soft, low notes of magic power. But, listen to others, and you will find their prayers pitched upon quite another key. The brother prays with full assurance that God's kingdom is established upon the mountains, where its foundation can never be removed; and, though the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, yet surely God's kingdom and purpose will stand, and he will do all his pleasure. And as you hear such petitioning, shrill and clear like the sound of a trumpet, you feel that the voice of faith is both musical and prevalent. The man has no doubt as to God's triumphing; he is quite certain that the Lord's hosts will win the day, and he prays in that spirit. Now, if these varying tones are melted into one, what masterly harmony they make! Therefore, the Lord promises great things when two of us

agree as touching anything concerning his kingdom. But, now comes in a third petitioner, and his tone of prayer differs from the other two. The same spirit of prayer is in him, but its voice varies. He prays in this way. Bowed down with a sense of awe in the presence of God, the God of all the earth, he seems to speak measuring out each word, and he cries, "O God, shall not the nations fear thee? Such an one as thou art, shall they not tremble in thy presence? Wilt thou not be king to them, O thou Creator and Preserver of all things?" Like the cherubim, he veils his face in the presence of the excellent glory, and your soul by his prayer is solemnly ushered into the presence of God, and laid prostrate there. But, mark yet this fourth man, whose prayer is of another mould;—he is familiar with the Lord: he seems to have merged his sense of the sublime in that of the condescending, and he speaks somewhat in this way: "O Lord, my Father, thou lovest the sons of men, wilt thou not come and meet thy prodigal sons who are coming back to thee? Hast thou not given Jesus Christ to be a man, and bought men with thy precious blood? and wilt thou not come to them and press them to thy bosom, and make them thine?" As the brother calls on God he appears to come close to him and lay hold upon him, and say, "I beseech thee have mercy upon my fellow-men." Now, there is something blessed in both those prayers. I do not know which I prefer; but I do know, when I can get the blending of the two, the awe and the holy boldness, the familiarity and the sense of sovereignty, I find a double sweetness fill my heart. Ah, brethren, did you ever hear a prayer of that kind which moved the Lord's heart in the wilderness—I refer to the prayer of Moses, when he said, "If not, blot my name out of the book of life." This is the prayer of self-sacrifice, when the man feels, "I must have God-glorified; I must have these people saved; I would pawn my soul for it; I would lose myself if but this nation might be redeemed." That is grand praying—it is not all of us who can rise to it. If that were alone and the only prayer, it might grow monotonous, for it lacks compass; but, if you put all these prayers together which I have mentioned—the prayers of the tender and the prayers of the brave, the prayers of the awe-struck and the prayers of the familiar, the prayers of the importunate, the prayers of the self-sacrificing—then they fill the golden bowl full of sweet odours.

For my part, I love at prayer meetings to hear the prayers of the aged. There is a lack in our prayer meetings, and has been for some months, through the loss of one dear saint whose prayers used to be marrow and fatness to some of our souls on Monday evenings. The prayers of men on the verge of heaven are to us as angels to lead us also up to the gates of pearl. But, it is very pleasant to hear the prayers of young people also, even the very young, for as they talk before the Lord there is a charming simplicity and frankness too little found in others. And then, the prayers of men in middle life, full of experimental trouble, or, on the other hand, overflowing with experienced joy. These have their peculiar aroma, and I believe God loves to see them all mixed in the golden bowls.

And, what if I add he would have his people with their various peculiarities put their prayers togother. I, as a Calvinist, remark that our Arminian friends pray wonderfully Calvinistically. I can seldom

perceive much difference between them and ourselves, but no doub they do view more than we do some particular parts of truth ; we, o the other hand, pay a higher regard to another part of truth. Nov these various constitutions of Christians affect in some degree thei prayers, and when they are blended they give a peculiar harmony o sweetness to the incense.

At this time it is delightful to my thoughts to think that the prayers of different nationalities are being put into the golden bowl. Ou French brethren always charm me when they pray. There is a tender, filial love, an affectionate gentleness which is most delicious. Our American friends, so bold and sanguine, also delight us witl their confidence in God. Their prayers will balance somewhat th timidity of the French utterance. Then, our German brethren, witl their deep thoughtfulness, and their habit of going to the bottom o things, how solidly they make supplication. So with all our brethren of many lands; what a choice amalgam they make. I have beer present at prayer meetings, when I have heard the various nation pray, and my heart has been rejoiced, and I can conceive that to Goc there is a peculiar harmony in the blended prayers of the many peoples and tongues.

Look back and think of the prayers of all the ages as being in the golden bowl at this one time. The prayers of the apostles, the cries of the persecuted times, the wrestlings of the lonely ones of the Middle Ages, the moans from the valleys and mountains of Piedmont—the groans of our brethren during the Marian persecution, the pleadings of Covenanters and of Puritans,—all in the golden bowl together, and all with the live coals upon them, coming up from the hand of the great covenant angel, who stands for them before the throne, pleading with God on the behalf of his people. Let us rejoice that the blended prayers of the church are very sweet to the eternal God.

III. And now, lastly, brethren, LET US BLEND OUR PRAYERS, however faulty and feeble they may be, with the general supplications of the period. If united prayer be sweet to God, and we are sure it is, O let us give him much of it. We cannot make God happier than he is in reality, for he is the infinitely happy God; but yet, if there be anything concerning which he expresses satisfaction, let us abound in it. O church of God, cry day and night unto him. If thy voice, O spouse, be sweet in his ears; if he saith, "Let me hear thy voice; let me see thy face, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely," O turn not away thy face and let not thy voice be silent; but cry, and even in the night watches pour out thy heart like water before the Lord thy God.

We fail, I am afraid, we Dissenters, in devotion, very much because we do not value it aright. In the service of to-day, I believe the sermon to be a very important part; but I do not believe, as some do, that it is the all-important matter. I have heard friends say, "So-and-so will take the preliminary service," as if our praying and singing were only a little preliminary affair to be got through, but the preaching was the great concern. But, my brethren, praying is the end of preaching; the preaching is only the stalk, the real ear is the devotion which we pay to God. Do let us see to this, and seeing God is pleased with prayer,

offer it to him more and more; and remember that if we do so, we shall find a blessing in it ourselves. The more we pray, the more we shall want to pray; the more we pray, the more we can pray; the more we pray, the more we shall pray. He who prays little will pray less, but he who prays much will pray more; and he who prays more, will desire to pray more abundantly. And, dearly beloved, remember that prayer is effectual with God. We want to see souls saved. Are we not getting weary of living in this world amongst so many who are going down to hell? Is it not terrible to think, that after all the church is doing, thousands are being lost every day? We ought to bestir ourselves for men's souls, and we cannot do better for them than by praying for them. Let us, therefore, bestir ourselves in prayer.

In the eighth chapter of the Revelation you will find that the great angel who stood before God with the golden censer in his hand, full of the prayers of the saints, held it up, and the smoke went up to God; but, after a while, when the incense was all burnt out, he took that golden censer and he filled it with coals from off the altar, and then you notice what he did; he emptied the golden censer out upon the earth, and there were voices and thunders and lightnings and earthquakes. Read the passage. Now, when the censer of God's church shall have been well filled with prayer, and that prayer shall have been presented to the Lord, he will begin to work, and that censer which has been before God a weapon to prevail with him, shall then become against men a weapon to prevail with them. God will fill it full of coals, and pour it out upon the earth. His divine power shall then be seen. Then will come voices,—preachers here and there will rise; in the newspaper press, in the universities, in the public assemblies, there will be voices denouncing oppression, voices crying against priestcraft, voices preaching truth, voices declaring Christ. Then will come thunderings, for with the Gospel will go the voice of God, which is like thunder, louder than the voice of man. Then will flash forth lightnings, for the light of God's power and truth will come forth with majesty, and men's hearts shall be smitten with it, and made obedient to it. And then shall earthquakes shake society, till the thrones of despots reel, till hoary customs are dashed in pieces, till the land that could not be ploughed with the gospel plough shall be broken up with secret heavings from the eternal God. We have but to pray. All things are possible to us. Pray, brethren. You have the key in the door of heaven, keep it there and turn it till the gate shall open. Pray, brethren, for prayer holds the chain which binds the old dragon. Prayer can hold fast and restrain even Satan himself. Pray. God girds you with omnipotence, if you know how to pray. May we not fail here, but may the Spirit of God strengthen us, and to God shall be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Revelation iv. and v.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SPHERE OF INSTRUMENTALITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MAY 26TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus said, Take ye away the stone."—John xi. 39.
"Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."—John xi. 44.

THERE lay Lazarus in the grave, dead. His restoration to life was utterly hopeless upon any ordinary principles. Certainly Lazarus could not raise himself; his affectionate sisters could not, with all their weeping, give him a resurrection, nor could the disciples call back the departed spirit, and reanimate the decaying corpse. It was a hopeless case, for who could revive a dead man who had lain in the grave so long that he had begun to stink. Now, this is a parallel case with that of every unconverted sinner in the world. He is dead in trespasses and sins—not a little sick or somewhat wounded, or in a swooning fit—but spiritual death reigns over him. The sinner never gives life to himself. The thing is inconceivable. There are persons who imagine that the natural will of man sometimes inclines towards good, but, alas, this flattering supposition is far from the fact. Jesus said, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life;" neither will they come now any more than they did then. Until we see dead men raising themselves, we do not expect to meet with sinners who have spontaneously and without divine assistance turned themselves towards righteousness. Neither can relatives or friends regenerate the soul in which they take an interest, nor can the most earnest ministers bestow the quickening spirit. Those whom God has blessed in other instances are yet quite powerless in any fresh case, unless the same power shall anew be put forth through them. Death is a terrible picture of our natural state, but it is by no means an exaggerated one. The whole world lies before us as a valley of dry bones, according to Ezekiel's vision, and if ever the dry bones are to live, it will not be through an energy innate within themselves, nor through a power resident in the most zealous of men, nor through any might which even a prophet could exert apart from God. Education cannot develope life out of death, persuasion cannot excite it there, reasoning cannot infuse it—the divine arm must be revealed, or the case is past hope.

Jesus must come to the tomb of Lazarus, and his voice must cry, "Lazarus, come forth," or else the corpse shall remain inanimate, and increase in putrifaction. All that can be done by mortal man may be done, but nothing will be effected, unless Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, shall speak the quickening word. In his omnipotent voice lies the power, but only there. Now, let this be taken as a plain statement of our belief as to the Lord's work in salvation, and taken without any mitigation or dilution. We believe that in every case salvation is of the Lord alone and altogether. Regeneration is a supernatural work. Man must be born again from above—any power short of that from heaven will be ineffectual. The new creation is as much and entirely the work of God as the old creation.

"Can aught beneath a power divine
The stubborn will subdue?
'Tis thine, Eternal Spirit, thine
To form the heart anew.

To chase the shades of death away,
And bid the sinner live!
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,
'Tis thine alone to give."

But, having said this, we proceed to bear witness that what can be done by us ought to be done, since what can be done by man will not be done by Christ. It is a rule with our Lord never to work needless miracles. Indeed, he only begins the miraculous when the ordinary means can go no further. He follows the ordinary up to its verge, and then the extraordinary comes in. If a multitude are to be fed, so long as there are barley loaves and fishes to be had, Jesus will use them; he will multiply them and make them go further than they naturally could, but he will use them as far as they will go. Had there been neither loaf nor fish I do not doubt he would have commenced with an act of creation, but as it was, since there were a few loaves and fishes he does not ignore them, but makes them the basis of a work of multiplication. What a man can do for himself God will not do for him, and what Christian people can do for sinners they must not expect the Lord to do; they must work themselves according to the ability God has given them up to the point of possibility, and then they may look for divine interposition. Observe, in this instance, that there was a stone before the mouth of the cave in which Lazarus was interred. Could not our Lord have removed that stone with a word? Could not he have said, "Be thou removed hence, O stone," and it would have been done? Ay, he could have consumed the stone with a glance if he had so minded; but he did not choose to do so, because the bystanders were quite competent to take away the stone, therefore he said to them, "Take ye away the stone." And when Lazarus was raised, when he had come forth from the niche in which his friends had laid him, he was enshrouded with the cerements of the tomb; rolls of linen were about his body, and a napkin enwrapped his head, and Jesus did not by divine power remove the vestments of the grave. It would have been, if miracles may be compared, a smaller miracle to loose the living with a word than it was to quicken the dead, but since it could

be done without a miracle, it must be done without a miracle; and Jesus said to those who stood by, "Loose him, and let him go." The analogy teaches us that there are some things which we can do for the unconverted, and we are bound to do them; and there are certain other things in which we can aid those who are newly converted, and these we should hasten to perform. While we look alone to the life-giving Lord to quicken the soul, we do not fold our arms in indifference, or excuse ourselves from all effort upon the ground of inability, but we are on the watch to see where instrumentality is applicable, and ready at all times to be made useful wherever we can be. We cannot turn the dry bones into living men, but we can prophesy upon them, and, blessed be God, we can also prophesy to the four winds, and so by our means the dead may live. The sphere of human action in connection with regeneration is my subject this morning. Help us, O Divine Spirit.

First, there are some things which we can do for the unconverted *before they are quickened*. He said, "Take ye away the stone;" secondly, there are some things which we can do for them *after they have been quickened*. He said, "Loose him, and let him go."

I. First, then, dear brethren, THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH WE CAN DO FOR THE UNCONVERTED BEFORE THEIR QUICKENING. I am sure, if our hearts are right, all that can be done we are most anxious to do. Jesus Christ is our model, and observe how he laboured in the work of blessing the sons of men. In this case he took a long journey, he wept, he groaned, he was troubled in spirit, he prayed, and then he spake with a loud voice. True picture of what every Christian should be, and especially every Christian minister. We should journey after souls; we should weep over their ruined estate; we should groan for them, and be troubled at heart on their account; we should be incessant in our prayers; and when God speaks through us to the awaking of the dead, it should not be with tones unearnest, but with a voice tender with love, and vehement with zeal. We are to be imitators of Christ in this; we ought to throw our whole heart into the blessed work which he honours us to do in his name.

Brethren, all of us can do for the ungodly what the sisters did for their brother. Mary and Martha called in the Master to minister to their sorrow. Being well assured when their brother was ill that they had no more sympathising or able friend in all the world than the Master whom they loved, they sent a message to Jesus; and, though they did not send a second afterwards, yet I doubt not they felt that the former one sufficed. So you and I ought, in the case of all the unconverted over whom our spirit yearns, to call the Saviour to the rescue. Let us send a message to him about them. You may word it in some such terms as these: "O Lord, I grieve to tell thee that my dear child is still unsaved;" or thus, "Lord, thou knowest thy servant's heart breaks because my wife, or my husband, is still unconverted;" or, you may put it thus: "O Saviour, thou knowest that in my Sunday-school class, the children are not yet brought to thee;" or, I may send it as my message, "My God, thou knowest I have preached to many of these people for many years, and yet they still remain unmoved, and abide strangers to their God." We must earnestly intercede with the Lord for souls. Jesus is the Wonder-worker. He is the resurrection and the

life, and our wisdom is to lay hold upon his strength, and beseech him to reveal his saving might.

In addition to this we must then express our confident faith in Jesus, that even now whatsoever he will ask of God, God will give it him. We must believe that he is able to raise the spiritually dead. We must never allow ourselves to despair of any person, since the matter is in the hands of an Almighty Saviour. Though the sinner by this time stinketh and hath become immoral, as well as unholy, yet it is not too late to ask the Lord Jesus to work. We ought never to say of any person, "It would be vain for us to labour for his conversion, he is so vicious as to be incapable of grace." We are not thus to forestall man's condemnation, but rather to obey the Master's message and go into all the world with good news for every creature, for the gospel is without limitation when it declares, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Beloved, have faith in the Lord Jesus: tell him how desperate the case is for you, but say to him, "Lord, it is not impossible with thee." Assure him that while you feel yourself to have no power, you are sure that one single word from him will effect all that your soul desires.

Now, this every believer can do, God helping us we can repair by faith to the Lord Jesus. But, our first text indicates yet more clearly the line of our capacity. Jesus employed others in the rolling away of the stone. You cannot make the dead live, but you can take the stone away from the mouth of their sepulchre. Let us speak of certain stones which we should with all diligence remove.

The first is the stone of *ignorance*. This heavy weight lies at the mouth of many a spiritual grave at this day. I think we take for granted too high an attainment of knowledge amongst the people at this present time. I am sure that many sermons are preached to people as though they perfectly understood the plan of salvation; whereas, if the preacher did but know his hearers better, he would discover that even upon the elements of the gospel of Christ many of them are deplorably ignorant. In fact, I fear me, that the elementary truths of Christianity are not preached sufficiently often, because too much is taken for granted. It is to be feared that the alphabet of the gospel is unknown to thousands whose teachers are trying to instruct them in the classics of theology,—a waste of effort and a dangerous experiment. Why, in this City of London, you shall find persons who frequent Protestant places of worship who yet believe in salvation by their own works, and are horrified at justification by faith. You shall discover, if you go among the masses, an indifference to salvation so great as to be appalling, and this originates largely in ignorance. Salvation! why thousands do not know what you mean by the term, and here, in this century of light and advancement as we boastfully call it, gross darkness covers the minds of a large proportion of our countrymen. Brethren, the time has not come for you to cease distributing the very plainest of tracts; the time has not arrived for you to be silent at the street corners even upon the first principles of the faith; you must still proclaim atonement by the sacrifice of Christ, and the simple doctrine of justification by faith. Possibly there may come an age when it will be wise to expatiate mainly upon the

deep things of God; but, for this present distress, we may wisely give our whole strength to telling out the foundation fact, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Our sermons must repeat times out of number the story of the cross. The hymns most commonly sung should be of the same order as—"Rock of ages, cleft for me;" "Jesus, lover of my soul;" "Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched;" and, "Just as I am, without one plea." We have even need of such simple ditties as—"I do believe, I will believe, that Jesus died for me." For upon that point ignorance and unbelief still cloud the mass of the people among whom we dwell. Let not the people be destroyed for lack of knowledge. Let none go down to hell because they know not of a Saviour. Let me say here that, even with those who have heard the gospel well preached, this ignorance may still remain, as it did in my own case. I believe if I had known that all I had to do was to look to Christ and I should live; if I had really understood that there was nothing for me to be, nor feel, nor do, but that I had only to rest in a finished work and take from God's mercy that which Christ had completed, I think if I had known that truth I should have found peace with God before; but, I did not understand the gospel, and therefore remained in distress of mind. Do, then, tell everybody about Jesus, tell them of the Son of God made flesh; tell them about substitution, speak out the word plainly; tell them—

> "He bore that we might never bear
> His Father's righteous ire."

Assure them that whosoever believeth in him is not condemned, and that to believe is to trust. Open up that word, for even plain and simple words get to be technical, and men dream that there is some other meaning in them than that which they ordinarily have. You cannot put the gospel too plainly, but anyhow, do put it before them, and thus roll away this stone from the mouth of the sepulchre.

Alas, a second stone is often there, namely that of absolute *error*. That the mind be without knowledge is not good, for if we sow not wheat, weeds will assuredly spring up. Men ignorant of God's righteousness always go about to establish their own righteousness in some way or other. Thousands think that if they are sober, honest, upright, and so on, they have done all that is required of them, at least a a little spice of attendance at church or chapel, and just a little addition of religious ceremonies, may eke out any deficiencies of their practice; and, certainly, to call in a clergyman or minister when they shall lie a dying, and to have prayers said or read to them, will complete the structure which they have themselves begun. Brethren, this great stone covers many an Englishman's grave, seek to roll it away. Bear your own personal protest against the idea that the law of God will ever be satisfied by an imperfect obedience. Teach men that God's commandment is exceeding broad, that it deals with the thoughts and intents of the heart as well as with men's outward actions; and, when they see this, mayhap they will perceive the impossibility of ever keeping the law of God, and they will leave off attempting to work out salvation by an obedience of their own. Show them plainly, lovingly, tenderly, but yet honestly, that by the works of the law there shall no flesh be

justified, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. You know well, my brethren, that there are attempts made continually to place a huge stone of error over men's minds in the form of sacramentarianism. Regeneration, to what do they degrade it? They make it a ceremony in which drops of water effect marvels. Feeding upon Christ, what is that with these men? It is nothing but the eating of bread and drinking of wine. They put ceremonial inanities into the place of spiritual verities; they steal the substance, and, as a substitute, they do not even give us so fair a shadow as that of the days of Moses, but a mere smoke, a shade of a shade, rather blinding to the eyes than suggestive to the mind, and yet myriads of our fellow-men are quite content with such vanities. They suppose that there is some mystic efficacy in outward rites. Tell them, Oh, tell them, that

> "Not all the outward forms of earth,
> Nor rites that God has given,
> Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
> Can raise a soul to heaven."

Declare the need of grace and the uselessness of outward show; the spirituality of acceptable worship, and the childishness of ritualism. You will have done good service if you roll away this huge obstruction.

Very frequently the sepulchre of men's souls is closed up by the stone of *prejudice*. Men cannot really find anything faulty in Christ Jesus, or in his gospel, but still they will persist in stumbling at this stumbling-stone. They invent reasons for declining the gospel invitation. They prejudge the revelation of God, and make up their minds that it is unworthy of their acceptation. They shut their eyes, and then are obstinate in their assertion that there is no light. For instance, how common is the notion that religion is associated with melancholy. In every sphere of life, you will find a number of persons who fight shy of understanding religion, because they believe it to be the mother of mental miseries. They quote some one who went insane, and took to Biblical speculations, and another who is morose, and yet is a great stickler for devotion. They infer that religion is the science of making long faces, the art of being gloomy. Hence, men refuse to be soured by "crabbed divinity," and decline to imitate the morose and melancholy Puritans. A wonderful mistake that about the Puritans, for there is evidence enough, and more than enough, to show that they were among the most happy of men, with a robust joy to which the Cavaliers' noisy mirth was mere froth. At this present moment, if you desired to find a happy people, I would advise you to search in the church of God for them. It were a strange thing if to have one's sins forgiven would make one unhappy: it were a very odd thing if being at peace with God caused a man to be wretched: it were a very turning of the world upside down, if the possession of a good hope of heaven should be the source of gloom in the soul. But, it is not so. Brethren, by your continual happiness and manifest cheerfulness roll away this stone, and especially remove it from the minds of young people. Make them see, in the brightness of your countenance, the practical answer to the common calumny. Convince them that you have an inward joy which they do not understand. Tempt them as it were to Christ, by telling them of the sweetness which you experience in him.

Many have the notion, too, that true religion makes a man unmanly and effeminate. Perhaps certain professors have lent a colour to this charge by affectation of manners and absence of common sense. Certain religionists are always dwelling upon the "must nots" of religion, as if godliness was a set of negatives, a garden enclosed with thorns. The manufacture of new commandments is a very fascinating occupation for some people. You must not do this, and that, and the other, till one feels like a baby in leading strings. I find ten commandments are more than I can keep without a deal of grace, and I do not mean to pay the slightest regard to any beyond. Liberty is the genius of our faith, nor do we mean to barter it away for the esteem of modern Pharisees. They say to us, "Thou shalt not laugh on a Sunday. Thou shalt never create a smile in the House of God. Thou shalt walk to public service as though thou wert going to the whipping post, and thou shalt take care when thou preachest that thou dost always make thy discourse as dull as it can possibly be." We do not reverence these precepts. Anything which is of God we honour, but not the sickening decrees of cant. We are men, and not slaves. Our manhood is not annihilated by grace. We think, and speak, and act for ourselves, and are not the serfs of custom and fashion. We speak out our minds even when propriety is shocked and respectability is enraged. I would always give to young men this piece of advice: Quit yourselves like men, let nobody have to say that your religion is mamby-pamby, and your conversation affected. Do not be always sugaring every person you speak of as 'Dear this,' and 'Dear that,' for this savours of nauseous hypocrisy. Do not whine or turn up your eyes, or affect to be very devout. Be holy, but not showy; true, but not obtrusive. Be men, be manly, be Christians, be like Christ. He was the very highest type of man; you never see anything stilted, or unnatural in him, he is always himself, transparent, out-spoken, brave, honest, true, and manly. Redeem religion from the reproach of stiltedness; and so roll away one of the stones from the sepulchre.

Some, we know, have a notion that religion is a mere sentiment; that it lies in being affected about your dead children and your parents in heaven, in weeping over death-bed scenes; in fact, is best seen in excited meetings and their consequent emotions. By worldlings religion is judged to consist in womanly feeling, but to have no truth, no facts, no philosophy at its back. Oh, but it is not so; we can give as good a reason for the hope that is in us as though our religion never brought a tear to our eye, and never stirred the emotion of joy within our souls. I venture to say it, that our religion is as much based on facts as astronomy or geology, I mean indisputable historical facts; and I assert that the doctrines of revelation are verities as certain as the demonstrations of mathematics. The gospel reveals certainties, and they are worthy of the contemplation of men of the most enlarged minds. Our gospel is not mere platitude and baby talk; there is a depth in it which no intellect can fathom. Titanic intellects have found their match in the things of God. The genius of Newton and Locke did not complain of want of room in the wondrous truths of God; to them they were waters to swim in. There is room for all the high culture, and all the thought, and all the training

that this world shall ever see; room for it, ay, and at its utmost, it shall only stand upon the shore of the main ocean of divine truth and cry, "O the depths of the wisdom of the Lord." By intelligently setting forth the great matters of the gospel, let us roll this stone away; for to some it has been a crushing obstruction.

Very commonly among our working classes another stone lies over their grave, namely, the opinion that the gospel is not for the like of them. I have frequently heard it expressed by them that it is very proper indeed for ladies and gentlemen, persons of money and leisure, to be religious, but it is quite out of the question for a man who has to earn his living, and tuck up his shirt sleeves to hard work. "Why," say they, "what have dockyard labourers, cab-drivers, and costermongers to do with religion?" Now, of all the strange prejudices in existence, this is one of the strangest, because from time immemorial it has been the boast of the gospel that "the poor have the gospel preached to them;" and, if there be one class of the population to whom the gospel is gladder tidings than to any other, it is to them that labour and are heavy laden. Why, dear friends, if you have little in this life, there is the more reason why you should seek the boundless treasures of the life to come, and if you have much trouble and sorrow here, the more reason why you should seek Christ to be the balm of all your wounds, and the cordial of your cares. Christianity drew its apostles from the working classes, and from the same source it has gathered martyrs numberless. Though the Lord has had a remnant in the upper ranks, yet, it has still been true, that "not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen." The great mass of Christian discipleship has been taken from among the poor and the working men. Besides, Christ is the people's Christ. What a grand sentence is that of the Psalm, "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." Jesus is the people's man by birth, by education, and by sympathy. He was ordained of God to be a leader and commander for the people. Jesus Christ is just such a friend as the people want. Tell the people so, especially you who belong to them and know it. Make your houses preaching places to your fellow-workmen, and make your conduct a constant sermon upon the adaptation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to their wants. So much for the stone of prejudice; but, I must pass on.

Frequently, over the graves of spiritually dead persons, there lies a stone of *solitariness*. They feel as if no man cared for their soul. I have known that happen in this Tabernacle. Persons have come in for months and nobody has spoken to them because they were strangers: and, therefore, the gospel did not enter into their hearts because they said, "The church of God does not care for us, we are unknown and unvalued." Half a word from some kind Christian sitting near them has been the means of melting them down, and the very next sermon they have heard has been in God's hands the means of bringing them to Christ. In this city a man may lose himself more effectually than he could in the desert of Sahara. You may get away into one of our streets, ay, and work in one of our factories, and nobody will interest himself about you. While happily few pry into their neighbour's affairs, unhappily few have any sympathy for their neighbour's griefs. Hearts

may be breaking around us, and we may be as merry as May. Children of God, I charge you in the name of the quickening Saviour, never let this stone lie two Sundays together over the grave of a single attendant of this house, but prove to those who sit with you here that you have a loving care for their souls.

Another stone that can be rolled away is that of *degradation*. Some bring themselves into the ditch by their sins. They break the rules of society, they become dangerous, and, at length, are treated as outcasts. When a person feels himself outlawed how little hope there is of raising him. Many sink themselves to poverty by their vices and extravagances, and thousands degrade themselves by abominable drunkenness. The Christian church does well when it uses its utmost power to deliver the drunkard from his besetting sin. Temperance will not suffice instead of godliness, but it may put men in the way of gospel influences. God forbid we should stop short in any reforms, for these will only roll away the stone from the grave, but yet, let no stone remain. Many a man has first been delivered from the habit of intoxication, and then his ear has been opened to listen to the truth as it is in Jesus. The poor harlot too, when Christian love has followed her and spoken to her of our Father who is in heaven who bids the wandering return to him, how often have her feelings of degradation been overcome, and she has fled to Christ for mercy? Brethren, none are outcasts to us. If the world says to the fallen, "Get you gone, you are not good enough for us," let the church of God open her door and invite the outcasts in. The church is the true Hospital for Incurables, among whom Jesus delights to work. Those whom the world calls lepers and drives away into contempt, it is our glory to restore. Come hither, ye chief of sinners, for Jesus waits to receive you. Make no tarrying, for you and such as you he came to save. The Pharisees repel you, but this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

We will mention one more stone, and that is *despair*. Some men are not only spiritually dead, but they are buried fathoms deep in despair. They have signed their own death warrants, though the Lord has not yet written them out. Ye people of God, look out for those who think themselves beyond all hope, and when you meet with them argue the point with them; tell them that you were once in the same plight as they are; and show them what grace did for you. Point them to the promises of God, which are so suitable to their condition; above all, tell them of the precious Saviour, who does not quench the smoking flax, and who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. You will have done good service if in any case you roll away the stone of despair. I exhort you, dear fellow labourers in Christ, yourselves saved, to do all that lieth in you to take away every one of these hinderances from sinners' souls, and then pray the Lord to speak the quickening word.

II. But, my time goes too swiftly, and therefore I must come to my second point with brevity. AFTER A MAN IS CONVERTED he labours under many disabilities, and Christian love should help him. When lambs are born the shepherd takes care of them: Christ's word is, "Feed my lambs." When plants are put into the ground they must be watered. It is not enough that the child be born; it needs a mother's

care. "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages" is God's word to his people whenever a new convert is born into the church. Lazarus is alive, but he is encumbered with grave clothes, and it is the business of those who are his friends to loose him and let him go.

New converts want loosing for the sake of their own *comfort*. It was a very uncomfortable thing for Lazarus to be tied up in his winding-sheets: for his own ease they must be taken off. When a man is saved, perhaps he does not grasp all that is involved in salvation. He thinks "I am a Christian, but I may fall from grace." Unwrap that band at once, and let him know that the Lord doth not cast away his people whom he did foreknow. He thinks that he is pardoned, but that still some sin may remain upon him. Unwind that cerement; let him know that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Perhaps he fancies, when he feels a strife within him, that he cannot be a child of God. Tear off that bandage, and tell him that all the children of God experience an inward strife, and feel a battle raging between life and death within their souls. You will find young converts apt to be the victims of doubts and fears, perplexing themselves about this, and fretting themselves about that; and you who are instructed in the faith must lay out yourselves to loose them, and let them go.

They want, also, loosing for their own *freedom*. Lazarus might as well be in the cave as be in bonds. Men may be converted, and yet be far from enjoying the full liberty of the children of God. Perhaps the saved one is fettered by bad habits, and he does not know that they are bad; tell him gently, but let him know that these things are not consistent with Christian life. I know at this time some real Christians who are going about with relics of their grave clothes upon them, and very unseemly they appear. Those grave clothes stick to all of us, more or less; and I suppose, till we enter heaven, the loosing operation will need to be continued; but let us help our brethren in this by example and by precept; let us take away from them that which hinders them from the liberty of holiness.

Moreover, Lazarus wanted loosing for the sake of *fellowship*. He could not talk with Mary and Martha yet, for he had a napkin about his head: he could scarce move or speak. So many of our dear converts do not like to join the church yet. They say they are not perfect. Poor souls, if they were we should not want them in our churches; being all imperfect ourselves, they would be out of place if they joined with us. They plead that they are not fit to come, imagining that something of fitness is wanted beyond believing in Christ; as if that which Jesus laid down as the gospel of salvation was not also a sufficient basis for fellowship with saints on earth. Still, the timid hold back and do not like to communicate to others what the Lord has done for them. Encourage them, compel them to come in; do not let them wander in solitude, but introduce them to the fellowship of the saints.

We have known cases in which the liberty was wanted to enable them to bear *testimony*. Lazarus could not even say, "I live and blessed be the name of God," for the napkin was about his head. He must be

loosed that he may tell what God had done. Oh, what comfortable testimonies the church might have if saints were but encouraged to deliver them, but there are some who carry wet blankets about with them, and the moment a young Christian talks about Christ, because he does not speak exactly according to orthodoxy, they try to silence him. Let it never be so among us. Let us encourage the babes to cry that by-and-by they may learn to speak. Let us encourage them to prattle, for perhaps ere long they shall correctly speak the language of the kingdom.

As for testimony so for *service* help is wanted. Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, but he did not know what God meant to do with him, and he was not fit for God to use till Ananias had instructed him. So with Apollos, he was a true Christian, but he wanted further teaching, he needed loosing and being let go, and therefore Aquilla and Priscilla became the instruments thereof. There was the eunuch on his way to Ethiopia, he needed to learn more about the Scriptures, to have the meaning of the prophet Isaiah opened up to him, and to be baptised on profession of his faith in Christ. Do not suffer any of God's dear living ones to be waiting bound up and captive, because we are so devoid of brotherly love that we will not do for them the needful offices of heavenly charity. The Lord help us, brethren, to be earnest about this.

Once more, after Lazarus was unbound, we read that he sat at the table with Jesus. So that he needed loosing for the enjoyment of *communion with Christ.* The trembling convert thinks himself as yet unwarranted to lay hold upon the nearer, dearer, and sweeter joys which surround the person of Christ: he dreams that these are reserved for old saints, that these wines on the lees well refined are for men who have fought the good fight and almost finished their course; but, indeed, he errs and deprives himself of joy. The songs of Zion are for the early morning as well as for the shades of evening. Go and tell young Christians so, encourage them to commune with Jesus, tell them he loves all his people with an equal love, and is ready to manifest himself to them as he does not unto the world. In this respect you will loose them, and let them go.

I will not prolong my talk, but finish with two inquiries, which I desire to put very plainly. The first is this: Dear brethren, I have told you what can be done for sinners before conversion. I have told you what can be done for them afterwards. I beg to inquire how many of you are doing either the one or the other? I will not take the writer's inkhorn and make a list of the diligent among you, but I will ask each man's conscience to officiate as a scribe, and to put down his name if he be really serving Christ. For, mark you, beloved, it is idle to talk about our duty, the thing is to be daily and constantly doing it. Time is gliding away, men are dying, hell is filling, Christ's name is being dishonoured. There are but twelve hours in the day, are we walking while we have the light, and working for God while we have the opportunity?

If every one of us will give an honest answer to that question it will do us good, even if we have to confess that we have been sluggards. It may lead to shame, and that to confession, and that to prayer, and that to a renovation of life, for if we are indeed the Lord's, let us

live while we live. Much of professing life nowadays is a thing to be ashamed of—it is cold, weak, narrow, and timid. I see everywhere enthusiasm, except in the church; I see stir and push and vigour in business; I see the world girdled, that men may send the messages of commerce with lightning speed, while the message of the gospel lags; I see the mountains bored, I know not next but the sea's deep bed may be tunnelled. Earth for earth can do anything, but for heaven how little will earth perform. May God quicken us that we may be a living, earnest people.

The other inquiry is this, how far is the Lord Jesus working in our families, and among our connections, in the matter of raising the spiritually dead? Are your children saved yet? Are your servants regenerated yet? Brothers and sisters, are they saved yet? Husbands and wives, has God quickened them yet? Come, let us pass the question round. The angel said to Lot, "hast thou here any beside?" a very weighty question. Oh! that God may grant that you and I may be like Noah, who had all his sons, and his sons' wives, and his own wife in the ark with him. May we never leave off praying till it is so. If there be but one unconverted one in any way linked with us, let us pray day and night till that soul be saved, and then let us take up the neighbourhood in which we dwell, and the streets where we reside. This great city, this perishing city, God help it, and in mercy visit it. I believe he will, if he finds us willing to do the work of rolling away the stone, and equally willing to unloose the bands. God will not send children to us if we cannot nurse them; he will not send lambs to us if we will not shepherd them. God is not so unkind to new-born souls as to send them among a people that do not care for them. He will make us travail in birth before children shall be born to God here, because soul travail is the means by which love is wrought in us towards them, and so we are taught to handle them affectionately, cherish them carefully, and bring them up for the Lord. O church beloved, over whom Christ rejoices, I charge thee serve the Lord Jesus with diligence in this divine service of doing good to the sons of men.

God bless you, beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—John xi. 1—46.

Mr. SPURGEON begs to inform his friends that Messrs. PASSMORE and ALABASTER have just published Vol. III. of the *Treasury of David*, containing Psalms liii. to lxviii. Price 8s. This completes one-half of this laborious work.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TESTIMONY AND EXPERIENCE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JUNE 2ND, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."—John iv. 39—42.

THE most important question concerning any man living is this, is he a saved soul or no? It is of comparatively little consequence whether he be rich or poor, educated or uneducated, compared with this, is he among the living before God or is he dead in sins? Is he pardoned or unpardoned? Is he a child of God or an heir of wrath? Is he walking in the darkness or has he passed into the light? Hence of all the days of a man's history the most important is the day in which he is born again. If the man be indeed saved, and a new man in Christ Jesus, he will look back upon the day of his regeneration as his chief birthday. His new birth is second in order of time, but he will always put it first in importance. His birth gave him his being, but his new birth secured his well being. Being born first we might have descended into hell; but, being born a second time we are secured for heaven. If we were to observe those days with the greatest festivity which deserved best to be commemorated, we should certainly make high days and holidays of the days in which we looked to Jesus, and "found in him our star, our sun." For this reason the circumstances which surround our new birth are to us amongst the most deeply interesting incidents of our own or any other human history. The details may be very simple; they may not suffice to make a biography; but still, to us, they are most important. We delight to think of the place where Jesus met with us, the providence which brought us to the spot where we first heard the words which convinced us of sin; we feel pleasure in remembering every detail of our sorrows when we were seeking rest and finding none; and we are charmed as our eye reads in our diary

the story of how it was that we found the way of salvation, how it was that we looked to Jesus and lost our burden in a moment: our memory lingers and our heart loves to remember where it was, and by whose lip it was, that the life-giving message came, and we looked to the Crucified One and were lightened. This is the reason why this chapter is so interesting, because it is the story of a conversion, the registry of a new birth, the record of salvation. It is the story of the conversion of a remarkable woman, great in sin and afterwards great in zeal; it tells us how the work was effected, what was said to her by the Lord, how she replied, what she felt, and how she was brought out into light. This fourth chapter of the Gospel of John has in it not only that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, but that touch of grace which creates sympathy in all regenerate hearts; and, consequently, it will always remain one of the most interesting portions of holy writ. But it is not for itself alone that I shall conduct your minds to this suggestive history. While I shall be talking of this woman, my earnest desire is to feel in my own soul whatever of truth is uttered, and that each one here may be putting every truth to himself in the form of searching questions, saying concerning each thought now uttered, "Do I understand that truth? Am I partaker of that grace?" Thus, our hearing will be profitable, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, and the woman of Samaria will become a prophetess to us also.

First, then, our text most naturally suggests the remark that *testimony is frequently the means of creating faith.* "Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman which testified, he told me all that ever I did." But, secondly, *where personal testimony fails, faith may yet arise,* apart from human witness, for "many more believed because of his own word." Then, thirdly, *even where faith has been begotten through testimony, personal experience very soon eclipses all human witness.* "Now we believe," said they, "not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

I. The first doctrine this morning is that HUMAN TESTIMONY IS FREQUENTLY MADE THE MEANS OF PRODUCING FAITH IN MEN'S HEARTS. That is evident to all. Hundreds of instances in proof thereof are present here this morning. A very large number of us owe our conversion to God to the personal testimony of others, who told us what the Lord had done for them, told us in words, but also showed us in their actions, for we perceived the change that was in them; we saw their calm of mind under trouble; we remarked their general happiness; we noticed and we admired their holiness; and we were led, both by their verbal and practical testimony, to seek a Saviour. This is the more usual mode of divine operation, that the testimony of one renewed soul should be blessed to another, and so the kingdom of Christ should be propagated in men's hearts.

To encourage all here who know the Lord to bear testimony for him, let us notice the case before us. It was that of *a woman.* Paul's preaching is very plain upon the subject of female preaching. He does not suffer a woman to preach, but this by no means bars her from bearing testimony in her own way, and she can so bear it as to do God's

work quite as effectually as if she usurped the pulpit. A woman was the foundress of the church in Samaria, which was afterwards multiplied by Christ's teaching, which continued till the time of Philip, and was then in a state of gracious revival. The first person baptised in Europe was a woman, therefore let none of our sisters exempt themselves from bearing witness for Jesus Christ; neither let them think that their witness is unimportant. God will put high honour upon it if it be rendered in simple faith in him, and, perhaps, where public ministry may have failed, their private testimony may yet succeed.

Again, the testimony was not only that of a woman, but of *a sinful woman*, one who would usually be condemned to silence by the customs of society. She had lost her character. It was fittest for her to be quiet. How could she be expected to be a witness for holiness whose life had been unholiness? How should she bear witness to the pure Saviour who had been herself impure? It is best for the unchaste to be little seen, and never heard. The objection would have been unanswerable had not the woman been changed in character. She was washed, she was sanctified, and renewed; and now the very life which had else been so just a cause for silence became an impelling motive for witness-bearing, since she loved much because much had been forgiven. In her own person she was a notable proof of the Saviour's power to pardon and reclaim. She had become a saint who formerly had been one of the chief of sinners, and her witness for Christ was all the weightier. If any of you shall have been up till now great offenders against God, this is no reason why you should not come to Jesus at once, and seek and find mercy; and, after you have come to him, your past transgressions shall be no bar to your future usefulness; on the contrary, you shall the more zealously and powerfully declare the power of his grace. The more mischief we have done in the past the more good we should try to do in the future, that by any means we may undo the evil we have done. How often has it turned out that the chief of sinners, like Paul, have become not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles; and the very force of character which made them ringleaders in evil has aided in bringing them to the front as captains of the Lord's host. We ought to be thankful, therefore, that we are allowed to bear testimony, and that our testimony may be useful, even though much of our past life has been such that we could wish to blot it out for ever.

Observe that this woman's testimony was *personal*, and there was the secret of its power. She said, "Come, see a man that told *me* all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Now, suppose that she had said, "Come, see a man who has opened up to me the prophecies." Why they would have said, "Prophecies! What have you to do with prophecies. Go and fetch your waterpot, attend to your business, mend your character, and do not talk to us about prophecies." Or, if she had said, "I find by reference to the works of Rabbi Simeon that the Messiah is to be very like a person whom I have just now seen sitting on the well." They would have cared very little for the Rabbi, or for her inference from his works. It was not because of any learning in what she said that they were convinced, but the personality of her declaration arrested them. Now, we make a mistake, I believe, when we assail men's consciences with quotations from the fathers, and passages

from the reformed divines. Human hearts will not be conquered by such poor artillery, and if we think that explaining a doctrine will suffice to win most men to Christ, we labour under a mistake. But, this woman did far better than that. She did as good as say, "You know what I have been, all of you, it is of no use for me to attempt concealing it, but I went to draw water at the well, and there sat a stranger there, a Jew, and though he could not have known anything about me by report, yet he directed a question to me which led me to discourse upon my character, and then he told me in detail all that I had ever been, and mentioned some facts which *you* do not know, and which I had forgotten myself. Surely, he must be the Messiah." They were very startled as they heard the woman's tale. How startled she was herself! How surprised she appeared! They listened to her eagerly, wondering much that she should talk of holy things. And, let me say, beloved, if we wish to win souls to Christ, there is nothing like telling to others what the Lord has done for our souls. It is of small use to tell them what we have learned in books, we must declare what God has written on our hearts. It is not describing what was said by the preacher, but what has been felt in our souls. Many a husband has been won to God by his wife's witness to the power of religion in her own soul; and many a child has been brought to the Saviour's feet by the father's speaking to him of what grace had done for him. Publish, then, your personal testimony, each of you, for this is the most effectual weapon for overcoming human unbelief and bringing men to Christ.

But, then, you will note that the woman's personal testimony was delivered *very earnestly*. In the first place she had left her waterpot, which was not only left for Christ to use, but much more likely because she was absorbed in the purpose to tell others what she had learned, and she was so full of her message that she left the waterpot behind. The men would notice that it was so: they would observe the hurried way in which she came back from the well, and, above all, they would see the way in which her eyes shone, the manner in which every muscle of her body bespoke the excitement under which she laboured. She said, "Come, come, see, see, a man that told me all things ever I did." How much depends in bearing testimony upon the way in which it is done. If our sermons were to hang like icicles around our lips, they would not be very likely to melt the ice in your minds; and if, in speaking to your Sunday-school class, your words fall like snow, they are not very likely to make children's hearts burn within them. If, in speaking privately to an individual, you treat your own conversion as though it were a commonplace affair, or aim at his conversion whom you address as though it were a matter that did not much signify, you might as well be silent. O sirs, you waste your breath, you lose your time. No good will come of it. Your testimony must be earnest, or it will be fruitless. There must be passion and there must be pathos. The soul must run over at the mouth, and the speech must be the outflowing lava of a heart that swells and heaves with inward fires.

I would have you notice the *judiciousness* of the woman's testimony. It is very striking. She did not say, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: *I am sure he is the Christ.*" She was too wise to be peremptory. If you positively assert a thing it is very likely

that somebody will deny it. There is a propensity in many minds to question inferences drawn by others, though they would draw those very inferences themselves if let alone. So, though she did not doubt that it was the Christ, yet she did not say it is, but she deferred to the self-assumed wisdom of the men, and she said to them, "Is not this the Christ? Don't you think it is?" as though she would have her belief confirmed by their judgment, and humbly requested them to come and see. This is a kind of Pauline taking them by guile, a method which is commendable, because there is no sinful guile in it; it is all plain, innocent guile enough. She knew something about human nature from herself, and, judging the men by herself, she did not dogmatise, but she put it in such a way that she knew what answer they must give to her question, "Is not this the Christ?" In fishing for the souls of men you need as much judgment as you do in angling, for men are curious fish, and they will often be frightened at a shadow; and, in the very way of throwing the line and managing the fly, there is an art not very readily learned. Some never learn the way, and are never able to attract souls, while others are endowed with sacred instincts by which they know how to handle men's hearts and win power over them. We must be wise to win souls; souls are not won by fools. We must have a sympathy with men, even reaching to their infirmities, and we much woo them as men, dealing with them not as they ought to be, but as they are, and putting truth in the shape in which it is likely to be acceptable to them. David chose out a smooth stone from the brook; he knew what sort of stone he could sling best, what sort of a stone was suited to his sling, what stone was best adapted to Goliath's forehead, and he sent the right stone in the right way. And so must you. If you bear witness for Christ, ask the Spirit of wisdom to guide you. Pray to be directed lest your earnestness should lead you into an injudicious mode of speech. Let prudence be mingled with your zeal. He is the Christ; but, if you want men to believe that he is, you will sometimes do better to ask men if he is than actually to assert his claims. The woman bore her testimony, and bore it well.

Now, observe the result. There were *many that believed* on Christ at once, because of the woman's speech. Happy woman, thus to become a mother in Israel. Blessed testimony, which was thus fruitful on the spot a hundred-fold. I warrant you, that many a bishop and doctor of divinity, and many a mighty orator, has spoken hundreds of times with less result than this poor untrained, unordained, female apostle of Jesus Christ. Her simple talk did more than eloquence could accomplish, though it should be as mighty as that of Cicero or Demosthenes. Her heart was in the words she spoke. Her speech was simple; there was nothing to recommend it of beauty of verbiage, or gaudiness of oratory. She said what she did know, and testified what she had seen, with an earnest desire that others should know and see what she had learned. Therefore God blessed her. Oh, may God bless many of us, whether men or women, to the self-same end; the bringing of many to Jesus. Those who were not converted under her were awakened and stirred up, so that they went to see the Lord Jesus, and brought him into their city, and asked him to stop with them, and many of these were afterwards converted,

so that she became in some sense the instrument of their salvation. Would to God that each one of us aimed at the same thing.

But, I have more practical work to do than this. I have a question to put to many here who have not believed in Jesus. Your not believing in Jesus, many of you, does not arise from want of testimony about him. The Samaritans only heard the testimony of a woman of very doubtful character, but they believed in Jesus Christ through it. I want to speak very pointedly to some here. You have heard the testimony of the best people who have ever lived, and yet you have not believed. Had you not the testimony of a mother who loved the Saviour, and loved you, and above all things in this world coveted that you should love her Saviour too? You know how earnestly she has spoken to you with as many tears as words, and how often she has backed her testimony with her prayers; but you have not believed. She told you that Jesus could pardon sin, could give rest to your conscience, and could preserve you unto his eternal kingdom and glory, and she besought you to come to him, but you did not come. In her case there was a good character to back her testimony. You saw year after year her quiet, patient, godly life, and, what is more, it may be I speak to some who saw the triumphant death of that same mother; and yet you have not believed. I have seen death beds which I have thought would have been enough to have convinced the most hardened; for there has been about the dying saint evidence conclusive of the power of divine grace. The body has been pained, but the soul has been placid. Storms have swept through every nerve, and yet perfect peace has ruled the spirit, ay, and more than peace; for the soul has rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. That is an unbelieving heart indeed which will not be convinced by the testimony of a near and dear one, a testimony supported throughout a holy life and crowned by a glorious death. There are husbands here, probably, whose wives always bear good witness for Christ. Your wife is not dead, and you know very well, in the bottom of your heart, that religion has done great things for her; and, if she were to die, you would feel deep regrets for the ridicule you sometimes pour upon her. Why, if I were not this day a believer in Christ, I think I should be of all men the most incorrigible, for I have seen the fruits of grace in a beloved mother, and in a gracious father. I could not be so base as to doubt their truthfulness, and yet I must do so or else accept their witness for the Lord Jesus.

Did I not believe in the depravity of the human heart, I should wonder how so many can reject the pious testimonies which everywhere surround them, testimonies of persons of the most honourable character, who, on any other matter, would be at once believed. Peradventure there may be some here who will say, "I do not know that I have ever had any testimony of the sort borne to me." Now, if you will allow me you shall not be able to say that any longer. I will bear my testimony for Jesus Christ at once. When I preach Christ and his salvation to you I do not preach what I learned in a college or was taught by men: I preach to you what I would die for; what is the chief joy of my soul; what I know and believe and have experienced. Years ago I was under the greatest conceivable darkness of spirit. I was but a lad, but my sin

haunted me. I had such an idea of the guilt of my past life that my heart was heavy within me, and at intervals I was crushed down with fear. I would get away into corners and cry and pray, when no one saw me, and I laboured under the belief that everybody else might be saved, but that I should perish. Now, I heard of Jesus Christ, that he was able to put away sin at once from any one who simply looked to him, and trusted him. I heard that, and I was enabled by divine grace, as soon as I heard it, to trust the Saviour. I did there and then rest the whole weight of my soul for time and eternity upon the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God; and my witness is that, in one single moment, a load was rolled from off my spirit, and as swiftly as a flash of lightning I passed from darkness into light, from misery into joy. From that hour I bless God that, being not exempt from trouble, and especially not free from a tendency to despondency which is always with me, I yet rejoice and will rejoice, and am happy, unspeakably happy in resting upon Jesus Christ. Moreover, I have found that those points of my character which were most weak have been strengthened, while strong passions have been subdued; propensities have been kept under, and new principles have been implanted. I am changed; I am as different from what I was as a man could be who had been annihilated and had then been made again. Nor do I claim the credit for this—far from it. God has done great things for me, but he has done the same for others, and is willing to do it for any soul that seeks his face. He is willing to do it for every seeker here. There is such a thing as a new heart and a right spirit; I know there is. There is such a thing as perfect happiness in death, ay, and even a longing to depart. I know that peace with God is to be had, for I have felt it and bear witness to it. Do you reject my witness? Peradventure, you doubt my truthfulness. Then, I must endure your injustice: for I know that I lie not; but, if my character be right, and if you think I speak the truth, then I ask you to receive the witness I bear. I wish I could bear it more judiciously and more earnestly, but I do bear it in all sincerity, with this desire in my soul,—I would that not only some of you, but all that hear me this day knew the preciousness of Christ Jesus my Lord, and understood that beneath God's heaven there is nothing so blessed as to be resting upon the blood and merits of the once crucified but now exalted Saviour. I bear my testimony as the woman from the well did. If you reject it, so must it be; but I pray you do not so, but come and see Jesus for yourselves, for he is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

II. FAITH MAY ARISE APART FROM THE TESTIMONY OF MEN. I shall speak of this second head for this reason. When you, who are earnest soul-winners, have borne testimony to any man about Christ, and he does not yield to it, do not despair of him. When you have preached to a man, and he is not converted, do not think that there is no other hope for him. The Lord has other ways of working besides the witness of his servants. Some of those Samaritans who had not received the woman's testimony believed because of his own word. Have we God's own word among us now? Yes, thank God, we have. We have it in the Scriptures. Some there are who will not hear the

witness of men, though it be loving and personal, who will yet bow before the majesty and power of the infallible Word of God. Let us hope that those who refuse our persuasions will yield homage to the Word of God. Let us trust that some in quietly reading their Bibles may yet be convinced and converted. If all *our* arrows shall miss them, let us hope that God's word will yet dart an arrow between the joints of their harness. Remember, the Spirit of God can work on men's hearts through truths which they heard a long while ago. He will not reveal new truths to anybody; the complete revelation is in the Scriptures; but he will often freshen up old truths in the mind. I have hopes of many men in London who never go to a place of worship, that they will be converted yet, because when they were children they were at a Sunday school, and there they obtained knowledge which the devil will never be able to make them forget. The seed is hidden, but not dead. I have seen in the country men digging a ditch, throwing up the earth from ten or twelve feet deep, and yet in that earth there were strange seeds, long covered with earth, which only wanted unearthing and exposure to rain and sun to develop them to the amazement of the neighbourhood; so there may lie seeds of truth deep down in the memory, and God the Holy Spirit may quicken them. We have known persons at their work not thinking of divine things at all; but yet a sudden thoughtfulness has come over them, and they have considered their ways. The Spirit of God, in fact, moved upon them. They began to meditate, and meditating they confessed their sins and turned to God.

Besides, remember God has many preachers that are not in human flesh. For instance, fever is a terrible Elijah. When the cholera came to London it was a Jonah in our streets. Many then began to think who would have gone blindfold down to perdition. When poverty visits some men's houses, and they can no longer indulge in drunkenness and gluttony, then they bethink themselves of their Father's house, and the hired servants who have bread enough and to spare. Omnipotence has servants everywhere; God can make use of even the ills of life to work eternal good. I have even known cases in which sin has been overruled by God to the awakening of souls. I remember a young man whose life had been strictly moral and upright, but who had disregarded all religion. He was a working man, and on one occasion he upset a can of varnish at his work. He was afraid of his master's anger and, when asked who did it, he denied the fact. He had never lied before, at least, not in such a manner, and he felt himself so mean, so degraded in having told a lie, that he felt himself to be no longer righteous before God, he bowed his knee and confessed his sin, and with a burdened conscience he went to hear the gospel, and found peace and pardon through the precious blood of Jesus. Disease within a man may be as dangerous as when it breaks out and throws its pustules through the skin. When the man sees sin in eruption, he only sees what was in him before; it could never come out if it was not first in him. The wrong act could never come forth if it was not in the man; and, sometimes, the wrong act has convinced the man that his nature was impure, and so sin though evil in itself has been the means of bringing conviction to the soul. God has many ways of bringing men to himself, and we should pray

that where we fail, the Word of God, accompanied by the power and energy of the divine Spirit may convert them, that they may be saved.

There are persons in the world of a singular disposition, and of peculiarly independent mind, who do not care to be shown anything, but prefer to find it out for themselves, and the probability is that if you wish them to see they will shut their eyes. The very thing they would find out and rejoice in, they will not learn from you. They keep themselves to themselves and will never be brought in by testimony, but they will be converted, let us hope, by the effectual working of the Spirit. I have known some too who are of such a sceptical turn of mind, so that testimony is not received by them. They have seen so much of persons being led by the nose by priests, that they will will not believe anybody; and, whereas some will swallow a lie, these will only with difficulty accept the truth itself from fear of being credulous. They are something like Thomas. Mary Magdalene said she had seen the Saviour. "Ah, no doubt you are an excellent woman, but you have certainly been deceived; you are so imaginative." Then Peter said, "I have seen the Lord." "I am sure you think so, but you must be in error." Then John said, "But, indeed, I have seen the Lord." "That is good evidence for yourself, but it does not convince me." Then Bartholomew and others would say, "We have seen the Lord; and five or six others have told you so. Do you think we have conspired to tell a falsehood?" "No, my brethren, far from it; yet I have known such things in the world as for five or six persons to be mistaken. I feel that your witness deals with such improbabilities that I cannot receive it." At last Thomas declared downright, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now, this was not right, but at the same time it was so; and our Lord was graciously pleased to yield to the infirmity of Thomas, and he said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and put it into my side, and be not faithless but believing." Persons of this character make eminent saints when once convinced, and our Lord has in some cases dealt with them in a special way; and, where the word of man has failed, his own word, attended with special power of the Holy Ghost, has brought them to believe. We must tarry no longer. I only introduce the point by way of encouragement to you who work for Jesus, not by way of sedative to you who will not believe. You have no right to expect you will ever have any other testimony than you have already received. You have Moses and the prophets, if you will not hear them, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead. You are not to expect miracles to convert you. Christ may go out of his way, but he is not bound to do so; you have no right to look for it. You may say, "Except I see signs and wonders I will not believe," but the probabilities are that you will not see signs and wonders, and will perish in your unbelief. Beware, I pray you.

III. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ECLIPSES HUMAN TESTIMONY. The very people who believed through the woman afterwards said, "Now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that he is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Personal

experience is far *more convincing* than ever testimony can be. You may believe a thing because you are credibly informed of it, but you believe it a great deal more deeply and thoroughly when you have seen it for yourself. In the times of famine Jacob was told there was corn in Egypt, and the patriarch believed the word; but, when they had gone to Egypt and had their sacks full, there was a deeper conviction in their minds about Egypt's corn than ever before. A missionary speaking to the inhabitants of a tropical region, informed them that water in our country, through cold, sometimes became solid. The generality of the natives would not believe him, it was too absurd a thing to be true. One, however, who knew the missionary's character did believe that water could become solid, so that persons could walk upon it; but, when he came to England and saw a river frozen over, his faith was very different from what it had been before. It was the same in essence, but of a deeper degree. So when we heard that Jesus Christ is precious and that he is a Saviour, we believed it; but, when we were saved by him, and found peace through him, we received a far deeper faith.

The faith that is based upon personal experience is *more essential* than any other, for until we have this faith we cannot know that we are saved. Those doctors who advertise their medicines know that the public depend very much upon testimony, and therefore they generally give us a list of cures, with the names of persons who have been healed. They expect that the readers of such testimonials will look with favour upon their medicine; and, I suppose it is so; but, if ever you have taken any medicine, and you have yourself been perfectly restored from some very painful and dangerous ailment, your faith in that medicine is quite another thing. Before, you said, "I do not know that all those people live at the addresses which are given, and perhaps they never lived anywhere;" or, if you really believed that the thing was correct enough, you did not take any interest in it; but, after your own disease has been removed by it, you are certain to talk about it to other people and say to them, "You know such and such a medicine; it is wonderful how it acts—perfectly marvellous the restoration I have received through it!" Now, it is just so when we come to Jesus. We are so fully convinced that we begin to tell others. But my point is that it is essential, because if I believe in the man's medicine, and yet do not take it, it is of no use to me; if I believe in Christ's saving sinners, but do not go to him to save me, he is nothing to me. If I am in danger at sea and there is a life-boat, and I believe in her, such faith will not save me, I must get into her; if I am hungry and believe in bread, it will not take away my hunger, I must eat it; if I am dying of thirst and see the crystal spring by my side, it will not save me merely to believe in the water, I must stoop down and drink it for myself. Personal experience is the essential proof, and we must have it.

And, let me add, that personal experience is always a *more complete* witness than testimony can ever be. Testimony can tell you something about Christ, but not much compared with what you will learn by going to him yourself. The Queen of Sheba was told of Solomon that he was wise, that his court was richly furnished, and that his dominion was magnificent; but, when she had herself entered the royal presence, her

heart failed her, and she said, "The half has not been told me." Witnesses about other things exaggerate, but witnesses concerning Jesus Christ always fall short. Painters have frequently won repute by making portraits fairer than the originals, but none can ever paint Jesus with a pencil that shall give too much of lustre to his noble face. He is so glorious that even angels who have seen him all their lives, and bowed before him where his splendour is best revealed, could not tell to man nor to one another the thousandth part of his excellences. If you want to know him you must see him for yourself. You must make him your personal acquaintance; you must press by faith into the inner circle, and cry with the spouse, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine."

This kind of evidence is the *most enduring*. What you receive from another man you might, perhaps, give up. In days of persecution those who believed the Bible on second-hand have denied the faith, but those who have had it worked into the warp and woof of their being, who have had their souls dyed and tinctured through and through with it, because they have lived upon Christ, and Christ has lived in them—these are the people who have stood on the fagots to burn, and have learned to sing the high praises of God while their flesh and bones were being consumed. If we want to become stalwart men, who cannot be turned aside by every wind of doctrine, whom neither Rationalism nor Sacramentarianism can shake from the gospel, we must be those who have been with Jesus, and in that way have learned experimentally from him, for such experimental Christians can never give up the truth.

Now, to close, I would observe this, that only those who know the Saviour experimentally can bear testimony to others, for this woman through whose secondary testimony many were converted, had, first of all, a personal experience herself. She said, "He told me all things that ever I did." If she had not personally learned of him she could not have gone out and spoken to others. So you who would be useful must get the truth into your own souls by personal feasting upon it. Only that which is in yourself can you communicate to others. Out of an empty bottle nothing comes. The Lord says to you as to Ezekiel, "eat this roll," digest in your own soul the doctrine you would preach. Have within yourself a well of living water, and then out of you shall flow rivers for others.

Let me add that, while it is a serious thing to reject the personal witness of others, it is a fatal thing to reject this other test of truth, namely, the trying for yourself whether Jesus is what he professes to be. When the offer is made to a man concerning any article of commerce, "This is an excellent production, and here are recommendations given by persons able to judge; but, moreover, you can take it home with you, you can try it for a month, and if it does not answer your purpose it will be taken back;" that is always considered to be an honest system of trade. Now, we say concerning the things of God, if you do not care to take our testimony, do not take it; but, do another thing, try the Lord Jesus for yourself. God does hear prayer: go and see if he does not. God does accept penitent hearts, and he has regard to contrite spirits: come and see, come and see for yourself.

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One."

Go and try it, go and try it. If you can prove Jesus Christ to be false, if after having tried him he rejects you, very well; then it must be so; but there has never been anything of the kind yet. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Did he ever cast out one of you? If so, he has broken his word, and that shall never be. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but none of his words shall ever fail. He declares that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Go to God by him and see. If he does not save you, if it turns out that you are beyond his power, that he cannot save to the uttermost, then tell it, preach the devil's gospel all the world over, and say the truth however horrible it may be. We challenge you to the test. If God be God serve him. If the gospel be true believe it. If it be a lie don't come here worshipping, or anywhere else pretending to worship a God you know to be false. Be not such double-faced persons as to say, "We are Christians," and yet do not worship the Saviour. One thing or the other. If the gospel be true it ought to be accepted: if it be not true, bear your witness honestly like men, and let the world be undeceived. We challenge the trial. In the name of him that died and rose from the dead; in the name of ten thousand times ten thousand arrayed in white robes, who have washed them in his precious blood; in the name of the church militant, which is on its way to heaven; we challenge you to the test this day whether Jesus be a Saviour or not, and we pray God to lead you to try it, for we know that your conclusion will be—"We have heard him ourselves, and we know that he is the Christ, the Saviour of the world." May God's Spirit rest on these words, and may we meet in heaven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—John iv. 1—42.

Many of the readers of our Sermons may be unaware that our Orphanage at Stockwell entails a daily expenditure of £10, over and above the income of its property. As we have kept clear of the system of purchasing votes, we are entirely dependent upon the free-will gifts of the benevolent. The notion appears to be common that our funds are always abundant, whereas, a few days ago, the trial of our faith was severe, since we had not even a day's money in hand. From this pinch we are now free, and if our sermon-readers who receive spiritual benefit would kindly join us in our labour of love by occasionally sending help, we should not be so tried again. Orphans have peculiar claims upon us. Our plea is not for ourselves, but for the fatherless. Help can be sent to C. H. SPURGEON, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington Butts.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"WATERS TO SWIM IN."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 25TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Waters to swim in."—Ezekiel xlvii. 5.

THE whole vision, though bearing other meanings, may be applied to the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It began at Jerusalem as a tiny rivulet. By our Saviour's preaching a few disciples, some of whom became apostles, were converted. These were the means of the conversion of a still larger number. But at the first the stream was very shallow, for the whole church could meet in one upper room. Even after the Pentecostal increase it was but as a brooklet. Herod thought that he could leap across it, or could dam it up, but his persecutions swelled the stream. Very shortly after the watercourse grew broader and deeper, till it attracted the attention of the Roman Emperors, and excited their alarm. They thought that it was time to drain the rivulet, lest it should become a torrent so great as to sweep them away. Their attempts to stay its course only added to its floods. Its current became more strong and wide than before, and on it went from age to age, till at last it had become a mighty river, watering the whole earth, and greatly blessing the nations. It is destined yet to grow until it shall be like the main ocean itself, for "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." We bless God that the day of small things which dawned at Bethlehem has already grown to a day of great things, and our faith fully expects to see greater things than these.

The vision might equally well be applied to the growth of Christian experience. When we first know the Lord the gospel is to us a very precious thing, and we rejoice in its pardon, and the consequent salvation which we expect to receive through it; but, compared with what we shall know of it by-and-by, our knowledge of the gospel at first is like a tiny rivulet. As we advance in grace it becomes a river flowing up to the ankles; and, as we are further instructed, so that our faith is confirmed, and our graces are developed, it deepens into a

river up to the knees, and by-and-by up to the loins; and further on (with some it has already happened: I trust it may happen to us all) it becomes "waters to swim in." I shall speak of the text as illustrating the Christian's experience when he arrives at that stage.

At the same time, the vision might be applied to our knowledge of the gospel as well as to our experience of it. As the gospel was gradually revealed, first in outline in the Old Testament, in symbol and type to the older saints, and then was taught by our Lord, and then the details were, as it were, put into his outline by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so to our own soul the knowledge of the gospel does not shine forth all at once. There is a daybreak before the fulness of noon: there is a blade—a tender green blade—before the full corn in the ear. The babe cries in penitence before the perfect man in Christ Jesus sings the song of assurance. Perhaps we have not yet come to know the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ; neither have we yet discovered how exceeding broad the gospel is, but what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Contracted notions we shall leave behind as the bird casts off the shell in which it was imprisoned; dim ideas will vanish, as the trees walking were seen no more when the blind man's eyes were fully opened. Childish knowledge makes us dream of comprehending the gospel in the hollow of our hand, but when we become men and put away childish things, we shall find in it "waters to swim in."

I see in the metaphor before us three ideas. The first is *abundance;* the second is *space;* and the third is *trust,* for there are not only great waters, but "waters to swim in."

I. The first thought of the text concerning the gospel is this, the idea of ABUNDANCE.

Beloved, God has provided for his people, in the gospel of his dear Son, no stinted store. He has not killed a sheep and invited one or two to his supper; but his oxen and his fatlings are killed, and "All things are ready." The provisions of God are on a royal scale—on an infinite scale. There is so much provided at the gospel feast that none need keep back from fear that there is not enough; neither shall the greatest eater at that feast ever say, "I have exhausted what was provided for me." The wine ran short at the marriage feast at Cana until the Lord came in, and then there was enough and to spare. As a king giveth to a king so hath God given to the poor ones of the earth—to his afflicted—to sin-stricken souls who seek his face. Honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, he gives his people. Moses spoke concerning Israel, "Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape;" but the food of the spiritual Israel is richer far. The child of God as he advances in the divine life rejoices in the abundance of covenant provisions. Let me mention some which strike me as exceedingly abundant.

And the first is the abundant provision *for the removal of sin and for making us accepted in the Beloved.* To put away my sin there needed an infinite atonement. I do not marvel, therefore, that it should have needed the Son of God to die, for sin is exceeding great: but, sometimes, when my soul has stood at the foot of the cross and considered

who he was that shed his blood for me, I have felt as if the price were too much. When I have seen my sin, I have thought it impossible for it to be removed; but, when I have seen my Saviour, I have thought it equally impossible that there could be any conceivable sin which Jesus' blood could not wash away. An infinite degree of merit must reside in the sufferings of our blessed Lord, such sufferings as they were, of body, of mind, and of spirit,—the suffering of being forsaken of man and of God too, and being left alone in utter desertion, to die alone, when he became obedient even unto death. It is the astonishment of all worlds that Christ should be the victim for human sin, and, when we think of him, we say, "O God, what waters there are here of pardoning love—what 'waters to swim in.' Surely whole hosts of sin shall be swept away by this mighty river of atoning blood."

"It rises high and drowns the hills,
Has neither shore nor bound;
Now if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne'er be found."

The wonder is, however, that while there is provision made to put away our sin, there is equal provision made *to impute righteousness to us.* We were guilty, for we broke the law; God provided a substitute who suffered the penalty of our law-breaking: but, he has done more, he has found a representative who has kept the law for us, so that after washing us he clothes us, after taking away our guilt he makes us positively righteous and praiseworthy before the throne of justice through Jesus Christ, his Son, whose righteousness we wrap about our loins, and in it stand fair and comely before the eyes of infinite purity. Oh, this is right royal and truly divine. Here is blood most precious removing every spot, and a righteousness most glorious conferring a matchless beauty, a beauty such as Adam in his perfection never had, for his was but human righteousness, but this day the children of God wear the righteousness of the Lord himself, and this is the name wherewith Jesus is called, "The Lord our Righteousness." Brethren, here are "waters to swim in," if we only contemplate this one particular of the arrangement for our justification in the sight of God.

Turn next to God's stores *for our sustenance and for our protection.*

For our sustenance there is bread provided from heaven such as angels have never tasted. There is water leaping from the rock such as the fathers drank not in the wilderness. There is no fear that either the heavenly granary or the celestial fountain shall ever be exhausted. The manna was without limit except according to the capacities of the people; and so the bread which we eat, even Christ the infinite One is not measured out to us by weight, but each may have according to his eating. We are never straitened in him, if stinted at all, we stint ourselves. After feeding millions of saints upon himself for these hundreds of years, Jesus is as full, and as precious, and as soul-satisfying as ever he was. O blessed food! How well has God stored his granaries for all his people! And the heavenly drink is equally abundant. Rivers are ours to drink of, floods and standing pools of living water. Drought can never befall us, for "the deep which lieth under" has been broached for us.

And, as for our protection. Think, my brethren, how the Lord's right arm is uplifted that his power may preserve the saints,—how his wisdom goeth to and fro in the earth watching for their good,—how his heart of love beats high with constant affection for them; how the whole of Godhead bows itself to protect the chosen; for doth he not compare himself to the hen that covereth her chickens; has he not said, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler"? God even our own God is both the sustenance and the preservation of his people; and, if we should want more, though more there cannot be,—yet, if our unbelief should think of more, is not all providence on our side? Blows there a wind that doth not waft us blessings? Breaks there a wave upon any shore which doth not bear us good? The huge wheels of providence as they revolve are full of eyes, and these eyes look toward the chosen of God. "All thinks work together for good to them that love God." And see ye not? If your eyes are opened ye will see them—horses of fire and chariots of fire surrounding all the saints. Invisible spirits of superior race are servitors to the beloved sons of God. All heaven's hosts are ready for our defence. If it were needful, the new Jerusalem would empty out itself of its thousands, as Thebes did of its myriads from all its hundred gates, and every angel would, with sword drawn, assail our foes, and put them to utter rout; for the Lord will not suffer one of the least of his own to perish. See then, brethren, what "waters to swim in" are here, so that for our provision and our protection we need not fear. Our wants are large, but the supplies are greater. Our daily dangers are enough to provoke our anxieties, but the Lord's eternal preservations lay those anxieties at once to rest. Blessed Lord, we are poor feeble infants, but when we lie on thy bosom we feel ourselves mighty in thy strength. We are penniless beggars, but when we feast at thy table we would not exchange our position for the banquets of Ahasuerus or the feasts of Solomon. It is our bliss to be nothing and to find our all in thee.

We must not tarry, however, but remark that the same breadth and depth will be found if we reflect upon the provision made *for our training and our perfecting*. Beloved, the Lord will not merely keep us alive and preserve us from perishing, but he means to make something of us. He has great designs in view. The poor clay of the earth when it is first dug up for the brickmaker does not know what is to become of it; but it passes through many processes, and at last is built up into a goodly house—a mansion for its owner. The clay of the pit may yet be built into a palace for a king. And shall we, poor earthly things, ever be living stones in the temple of God? I trust we are in some sense already so; but shall we ever glisten and glow like rubies and emeralds, each one after his own kind, as a portion of that city whose jewelled light is enough to blind the eyes of mortals by its excess of glory? Shall we ever be a part of the radiance of heaven? Shall we be revealers in our measure of the glory of God? Yes, we shall come to that, and though it may seem impossible, yet we shall believe it if we reflect a moment. God has already done for us much by giving us the inner life—a matchless miracle. It needs as much of his power to make new hearts and right spirits as to create new

worlds; yet he has done that for us. He has, moreover, preserved us up to this moment amid a thousand dangers, and has made those dangers contribute to our growth in grace. He has made our afflictions minister to our spiritual advancement. I owe more than I can tell to the graver's tool, and yet 'tis sharp, and I feel the lines of its cutting even now. Yet, let not the graver stay his hand, for how shall his work be done if he do not bear hard and cut deep? If there be no sharp cuts, surely there shall be no working out of his grand idea? Moreover, in addition to affliction he has provided all the truth of God in the Bible to sanctify us; he has given us the blood of Christ to purify us; he has sent forth the blessed and eternal Spirit to refine us, and, as subordinate agencies, he has provided all our comforts, and at the same time all our trials, all our companionships with holy men, and all the beacons of unholy lives that we may be educated for the skies. He is putting forth his wisdom, and his strength, and his prudence, and his love—I must repeat myself—to make something of us, though we are nothing by nature, and "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." I think, sometimes, when I see my own nature, that it were difficult for me ever to become a vessel fit for the Master's use, in the halls of the golden house above; and then, when I think who hath begun to work us to the self-same thing, and who it is that still is persevering in the work,—why then I conclude that if I were even worse than I am, he yet could make me what he would have me to be; and seeing the power that is ready to work it out, my soul rejoices in hope of complete conformity to the divine ideal. Here, again, are "waters to swim in."

Brethren, take another view of God's great goodness to us. What "waters to swim in" have we by way of *consolations and strengthenings*. Are you ever cast down? I hope you are not, but, if you are, as some of us are frequently, bowed down into the very dust, what a relish you will have for the promises of God. I am sure that a number of promises in the Bible were written on purpose for me. You may dispute it, and say, "No, they were meant for me." I have no wish to contest the point, but I still believe, as I have said, that they were meant for me, for they fit my case so exactly even in their very words, that they appear as if my case was especially intended. No doubt other believers think the same, and will join with me in blessing God for such a grand Bible. Well does our hymn-writer put it—

> "What more can he say than to you he hath said,
> You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

None can comfort a child like a mother. The mother knows exactly the child's state, and by her very love she throws a sweetness into what she says, which another could not successfully imitate. There are no comforts like the comforts of God. The Comforter puts into the inspired word a singular sweetness which the most able ministers cannot arrive at, even though they should be, like Barnabas, sons of consolation.

Brethren, let us think over our comforts now, for a minute, and our consolations. Have we not this for consolation—that God has loved us with an everlasting love, even the Lord who cannot change? Hitherto he has never failed us,—he has promised that all good things

shall be ours as we need them, and it has been so. Have we not this for a consolation—that he has given us Christ, and therein has given us all things? Can he deny us anything now, after having given to us his own dear Son? Let us think how dear we are to Christ, how much we cost him, how precious we are in his sight. Can he leave us? Can he be unkind to us? Let us reflect upon the way in which the Lord has hitherto always appeared for us in times of difficulty, and rescued us in days of jeopardy. Turning to the book, and finding it written, "I am God: I change not," let us be consoled for the future, and go on our way confident that all shall be well. All the covenant promises are meant to console us. All the gifts of sovereign grace are intended to give us joy. The attributes of God are springs of consolation for us. The human nature of Christ in which he comes near to us is a source of bliss. The gentleness and tenderness of the Holy Ghost who dwells in us on purpose to be our Comforter are dear subjects of delight. Indeed, if we be down cast, we must blame ourselves. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him." The consolations of the Spirit are "waters to swim in."

Beloved, we must draw to a close upon this one thought of abundance; just think of what God has done for us by way of *making us happy and noble.* He has not only pardoned us, but he has received us into his family, and he has taken us there, not to be his hired servants, as we once thought he might do, but he has made us his own sons; and what is more than that, he has made us heirs, and not secondary heirs either, but "joint-heirs with Christ Jesus"; so that we have come right up from the place of the slave into the position of the heir of all things. Our Lord himself, our dear and ever blessed Saviour, was not content to pluck us like brands from the burning—not content to make us his sheep, whom he should watch over with tender care—but he has taken us to be his spouse, and he calls us his beloved. Yea, he has done more. He has taken us to be members of his body, and we are of his flesh and of his bones. Was there ever such an exaltation as this? When Scripture speaks of lifting a beggar from the dunghill, and setting him among princes, surely it falls short of this wonder—that of taking a worm of the dust, a sinful wretch that was only fit for hell, and putting him into union with Christ Jesus, so that he should be a part of the mystical body of the Son of God. This is marvellous; and, as I think of it, I feel that I have brought you to the sea shore and shown you an ocean to swim in, the depth of which you cannot fathom. Oh the depths of the mercy of God! Now, in all this nobility which God has given us there is not a single piece of unhappiness. I should imagine that to rise into some positions in society must entail sorrow instead of happiness; for, as you ascend the heights, the air grows chillier, and the frosts are more perpetual; but the nobilities which God bestows are all of them of that happy—what, if I should say—homely, divinely comforting sort, that the nobler we are, the happier we are. If he makes us sons, our sonship is not all responsibility, it means love; and if he makes us heirs, oh, what happiness to be possessors of earth and heaven; and if he makes us his own spouse, the chief thought of our marriage union is not service, but love. God is not to us "Baali," but "Ishi shall

his name be called." Not "lord," but "husband,"—duty is there, but love is in the forefront. If we become members of his body, it is an honour, but it is much more than that, it is a bliss to be vitally, eternally, united to Christ our covenant Head. Why, dear saints of God, however poor you may be, and however low in spirits, and however sickly in body, you have a whole sea-full of happiness before you. You have a drop of bitterness now and then, but you have an Atlantic of sweetness, rivers of wine and milk. "Rejoice, rejoice," saith the Scriptures, and that most fitly, too, because there are, after all, more reasons for rejoicing than arguments for sorrow.

And then, beyond! beyond! Think of that which remaineth in Immanuel's land, beyond Jordan. Open now your eyes a moment. Do not let them rest upon that stream which is not near so wide as you have fabled it, whose waves are not so rough as your fears have made them. Look beyond that narrow stream of death; and what see you? Moses' sight from Nebo is nothing compared with the view which faith gets of the glory to be revealed. We shall see him, and shall be like him, and shall be with him eternally. His glory is our soul's delight on earth, it shall be our soul's transport in heaven. What will it be to see the shining ranks of the glorified, and hear their blessed song, and join with them and with the angelic choirs for ever and for ever—

> "Far from a world of grief and sin,
> With God eternally shut in."

Oh, beloved, here are "waters to swim in!" Let us bathe our weary souls in them by faith before we leave this place. The Lord grant it, in the power of his Holy Spirit, and he shall have the praise.

II. But now, secondly, our text gives us the idea of SPACE, amplitude, room. "Waters to swim in." Room enough.

And here, let us remark, that in the gospel, when our experience and our knowledge have deepened, we shall find a place of broad rivers and streams, under the following aspects.

First, as to *thought*. Many persons have the notion that the gospel is very contracted and narrow. I am afraid that a large number of our church members have not yet obtained a comprehensive idea of the gospel: nay, I am half afraid that they never will under some preachers who do not seem to have any clear view of the gospel system themselves, or, if they have, they fail to communicate it. Some deny the need of a system at all, but, somehow or other, everything we know does throw itself into a systematic shape, and though we ought, beyond all things, to deprecate a cast-iron creed, and the attempt to force every truth into one circle, yet it is a good thing to have a definite idea of what we believe in the things of God. Some have a tolerably clear idea, but it is a very narrow and contracted one. Now, there is nothing contracted in the Bible, it is a great book of a great God, inspired by a great Spirit, and calculated to give men great minds, for it is, in the great subjects of holy thought, "waters to swim in."

Think only for a moment of one or two subjects of thought, and you will see the "waters to swim in." Think of God as he is revealed in Holy Scripture. The Father ordaining all things, according to the council of his will; take the whole line of truth which connects itself with the

Father. Then consider the Son as man and as God, the surety of the covenant, the substitute for his people, the intercessor, prophet, priest, and king, the Lord who is yet to come. You have a wide range of thought there. Then consider the Holy Spirit. Dr. John Owen has written a massive volume upon the work of the Spirit, and you might write a thousand such volumes and not then exhaust the mighty theme. He dwells upon the work of the Spirit in creation, the work of the Spirit in sustentation, the work of the Spirit in inspiration, the work of the Spirit upon the human body of Christ, the work of the Spirit upon our Lord, in his ministry, the work of the Spirit in regeneration, in illumination, in consolation. Here are "waters to swim in," brethren. Indeed, the waters are so broad that I cannot attempt even to number them or make a map of them. Take only those lines of thought which come from the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—and you have boundless truth before you. Young man, you need never say, "I want to get a thought-breeding book." Man alive, was there ever such a thought-breeding book as the Bible? You need never say, "I found myself stinted for want of subjects." Oh, if thou knowest anything at all in thy soul about the things of God, thou wilt admire the infinity of Scripture, and never complain of having slender room for thought. Then think of the doctrine of election and all those stupendous truths which spring out of predestination. If you love deep subjects you certainly will find "waters to swim in" there; only, if you are not a child of God, you are likely to find them waters to drown in as well as waters to swim in, for it needs a man to be taught to swim by God's own grace in such waters as these, and when he once knows how to swim, it is one of the most delightful exercises in the world to take a bold stroke into the eternal covenant and dive into the deep things of God. Think, again, of the subject which lifts itself aloft from the opposite point —human responsibility, and turn that over—a rugged subject, assuredly, but most true, and as certainly taught in the Scripture as the doctrine of divine sovereignty in election. There are many who will not believe both these truths; but, rest assured, you will have to put out one eye, and you will practically lose one arm, unless you will believe both, for they are both taught in the Scriptures, and both sides of the truth will furnish you with "waters to swim in." If a man should have the largest mind that ever existed upon the face of the earth—if he should be a Newton or a Locke—still, if he would set himself down and prayerfully study Scripture, he would find that the themes for meditation are altogether boundless "waters to swim in." I could enlarge, but that might not be so profitable to you as to go forward.

Brethren, there are "waters to swim in," next, not only as regards subjects of thought but matters of *faith*. There are topics in Scripture which one can hardly think of long together; they are so perplexing. If we bend towards them and fix our eye upon them, we may strain our eyeballs before we shall see with understanding. There are mysteries beyond us. I thank God, I bless God, that he has given me a gospel much of which I cannot understand, for I am sure if I were able to grasp all revealed truth, and I met the devil in my vestry to-night, and he said, "Why, you have comprehended it all in your small brain: therefore, it cannot be from God;" I should not know how to answer him. But

now, if he ever meets me and tauntingly enquires, "How do you make these two doctrines square? How do you make them consistent?" I answer him thus, "Art thou also omniscient. Is nothing too hard for thee?" It is no business of mine to make God's teaching consistent in man's judgment. If the Lord has revealed truth, all I have to do is to believe it. I will look at it as long as ever I can: I will pry into it as far as I can go; but, when God locks the door and does not leave me the key, I shall not attempt to break the door open; and, if he does not tell me, I believe it is my wisdom not to want to know. Going to heaven does not lie in untying Gordian knots. Oh, how sweet to have something to believe where you get right out of reason's depths! We thank God that in the Scriptures there is a good deal which you cannot reason on, which you could not explain to a man who has only reason to go upon, something which he scoffs at because he cannot see what it means by his blind carnal eyes. I am glad to think that there is something for higher faculties to grasp—something for the spirit, the new-born spirit, to lay hold upon—that there are great things to be believed, as well as great things to be understood. And if I were now to try and show you the vast area which is opened up to faith, I am sure you would exclaim in the words of the text, "There are, indeed, 'waters to swim in.'"

Then, blessed be his name, there are "waters to swim in" not only for thought and faith, but also for *love*. Some make the doctrines of the gospel a cold stream, like the waters of the Arctic pole, and love would be frozen if she were to venture into them; but the Scriptures are like the gulf stream, warm as well at deep; and love delights to plunge into them and swim in them. Time would fail me if I were to try and show you the room there is for love in the Scriptures. We will, therefore, dwell on one thing only.

Think of the love of Christ to us, the love which nailed him to the tree, the love which made him give up his reputation on earth as well as his royalties in heaven, and become a worm and no man, despised of men and a reproach of the people for our sakes. A certain writer has written two volumes upon the sufferings of Christ upon the cross, and he has managed to make a chapter upon the nails, and upon the sponge, and upon the thorn, and upon the vinegar. And I must confess I have read his book with no small delight, and I have thought that he did not make too much of anything he handled; and, if he did seem to strain a point here and there too much one way, he might have gone a great deal farther the other way if he had but had his eyes more open. In the agonies of Christ there is, to the contemplative mind, a fulness of love unspeakable which makes the heart feel, "now I can love here without stint." I can love the dear companion of my life; I can love my children; but there comes the thought, "I may make them idols, and I may thus injure both them and myself." That is not "waters to swim in." But, if we loved the Lord ten thousand times more than we do, we should transgress no command in so doing: nay, rather, the only transgression lies in falling short. Oh, that we could love him more. There can be no excess of love in loving him supremely. The coolest logic can justify the intensest enthusiasm towards Christ. If a man had no heart, but were all head, he might reasonably act towards the Saviour

as those do whose whole nature is on a blaze with affection for him, and who seem sometimes to have forgotten the dictates of reason in the impulses of love. Oh, what "waters to swim in" is the love of Christ to us! But, it is just the same with the love of the Father. And (I think I have told you once or twice lately), I am sure it is so with the love of the Holy Spirit; for, while it was most gracious of the Lord Jesus to come and live *with* men, is it not quite as gracious of the Holy Spirit to dwell *in* men? I marvel at Christ *among* sinners, but I marvel quite as much at the Holy Spirit *in* sinners, for the best of saints are sinners still. To live in us, indwelling in these poor bodies of ours, —oh, the love of the pure and Holy Spirit thus to do! Here are, indeed, "waters to swim in."

Yet, once again. I have not exhausted this thought of space. There is room here *for the exercise and expansion of every faculty* within the range of the gospel. These are days of "modern thought;" as you are all aware men have become wondrously wise, and have outgrown the Scriptures. Certain unhappy children's heads are too big, and there is always a fear that it is not brain, but water on the brain; and this "modern thought" is simply a disease of wind on the brain, and likely to be a deadly one, if God does not cure the church of it. Within the compass of the orthodox faith—within the range of the simple gospel —there is room enough for the development of every faculty, however largely gifted a man may be. No matter, though the man be a Milton in poetry, though he be a master in metaphysics, and a prince in science, if he be but pure in his poesy, accurate in his metaphysics, and honest in his science, he will find that the range of his thought needs no more space than Scripture gives him. It has been thought by some that these persons who run off to heretical opinions are persons of great mind; believe me, brethren, it is a cheap way of making yourself to be thought so, but the men are nobodies. That is the sum of the matter. We are satisfied with the theology of the Puritans; and we assert this day that, when we take down a volume of Puritanical theology we find in a solitary page more thinking and more learning, more Scripture, more real teaching, than in whole folios of the effusions of modern thought. The modern men would be rich if they possessed even the crumbs that fall from the table of the Puritans. They have given us nothing new after all. A few variegated bladders they have blown, and they have burst while the blowers were admiring them; but, as for anything worth knowing, which has improved the heart, benefitted the understanding, or fitted men for service in the battle of life, there have been no contributions made by this "modern thought" worth recording; whereas, the old thought of the Puritans and the Reformers, which I believe to be none other than the thought of God thought out again in man's brain and heart, is constantly giving consolation to the afflicted, furnishing strength to the weak, and guiding men's minds to behave themselves aright in the house of God and in the world at large.

There are "waters to swim in," in the Scriptures. You need not think there is no room for your *imagination* there. Give the coursers their reins: you shall find enough within that book to exhaust them at their highest speed. You need not think that your *memory* shall have

nothing to remember; if you had learnt the book through and through, and knew all its texts, you would have much to remember above that, to remember its inner meaning, and its conversations with your soul, and the mysterious power it has had over your spirit, when it has touched the strings of your nature as a master harper touches his harp strings, and has brought forth music which you knew not to be sleeping there. There is no faculty but what will find room enough in the word, if we will but obediently bring it to the service of the Lord. There are in this respect "waters to swim in."

III. But now, lastly, the text has the idea of TRUST, at least, to my mind. I think it will have to yours. "Waters to swim in."

I should like to swim very much. When I have been at the seaside I have had a great passion for swimming, and I think I should have been able to swim by this time, but I could never persuade myself to take both feet off the bottom at one time. I have gone into the bath, and when I have felt a little of the buoyancy of the water I have lifted one foot, and I have been half inclined to remove the other, but somehow it was not done. I could not quite trust the liquid element after all.

The text speaks of "waters to *swim* in," and swimming is a very excellent picture of faith. In the act of swimming it is needful that a man should float in the water. So far he is passive and the water buoys him up. You must keep your head above water if you are to swim. We are told that the body is naturally buoyant, and that if a person would lie quite still upon the water he would not sink, but if he kicks and struggles he will sink himself. The first sign of faith is when a man learns to lie back upon Christ—to give himself up entirely to him—when he ceases to be active and becomes passive, brings no good works, no efforts, no merits, to Jesus by way of recommendation, but casts his soul upon the eternal merit and the finished work of the great Substitute. That is faith in its passive form, floating faith. In the heavenly river you must float before you can swim. I pray God to teach every sinner here to rest upon Jesus. You want to save yourself, do you? You will drown, man; you will drown. As surely as you live you will drown. Will you give up and let Christ save you? Will you believe that he can save you? Fall back into his arms. You will float then. There is no drowning a soul that gives up itself to Christ, and trusts entirely to him.

But the text does not speak of waters to float in, though this is essential. Many people never get beyond that floating period, and they conclude that they are safe and all is well, because they fancy their heads are above water; whereas the man who is really taught of God goes on from the floating to the swimming. Now swimming is an active exercise. The man progresses as he strikes out. He makes headway. He dives and rises: he turns to the right, he swims to the left, he pursues his course, he goes withersoever he wills. Now, the holy Word of God and the gospel are "waters to swim in." You know only what it is to float—many of you. You are resting in the truth of God for your salvation; but making no advance in heavenly things. Oh, beloved, let us learn to swim in those waters—*swim* in them; I mean, let us learn to trust God in active exertions for the promotion of his kingdom, to trust him in endeavours to do good. How

blessedly our friend Mr. Müller of Bristol swims! What a master swimmer he is! He has had his feet off the bottom many years, and as he swims he draws along behind him some 2,500 orphan children, whom, by God's grace, he is saving from the floods of sin and bringing, we trust, safe to shore. Dear brother, dear sister, could you not swim too? "Oh, but I have no money." You want to walk, I see. "But I have very slender gifts compared with what I need." Cannot the Lord give you gifts and graces? Will you not trust him? Dear brother, are you called to serve God in a very difficult sphere of labour? Cannot you go on? "I have nobody to help me." Oh, I see, you are all for walking on the bottom. Brethren, it is "waters to *swim* in." Cannot you swim without any help except the help of the All in all? See how the arch of heaven stands without a pillar. See you yon lamps of heaven how they burn? Who gives them oil? See how they are swung in heaven without a golden chain to hold them in their place. Yet they flicker not; neither do they fall from their sockets; neither doth the arch of heaven tremble. May the Holy Ghost teach us to trust. Oh, may God teach us not only the passive trust which leans on Christ and floats, but the active trust which manages the waters,—walks them, swims them, dives into them at will, as God helps it! We are not trustful enough of the invisible God. We are young eaglets, born of God to mount up to the sun, but we stand shivering by the nest, not daring to try our callow wings. Young eaglets, trust the invisible ether: trust it and rise aloft. It shall bear you up, and ye shall not fall. Trust it more. Put out all your wing strength. Lean on it more, and it will bear you up, up, up, beyond clouds and mists, up to the very sun itself. He shall rise highest who can trust most. He shall have most who can believe most in God. If you will treat with the Eternal on his own terms of boundless credit, and trust yourself without reserve to him, there are great things in store for you. Blessed Master, give us "waters to swim in." Though they should be stormy waters, though they should be drowning waters to our unbelief, they shall be swimming waters to our faith, and as we swim to heaven we will rejoice in thee, "having no confidence in the flesh."

May God bless these few words to you, beloved friends, and comfort us all with his own consolations, and be unto us ever more and more God all sufficient. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Ezekiel xlvii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

INGRATITUDE OF MAN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JUNE 9TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."—John i. 11.

I WOULD very frankly confess at the outset that I am not about to preach from the words of this text, and that I have selected it solely because it contains an epitome of man's behaviour towards the Saviour. He came unto his own people, the Jews, and answered in every particular to the descriptions which their prophets had given, but as they were looking for a temporal leader who should dazzle them with an earthly kingdom, they would not acknowledge the true Messiah; and, though he continued to come unto them preaching to them, and working such miracles among them as no other man did, so that their unbelief was without excuse, they still rejected him. This was a gross act of ingratitude. It was superlative kindness which brought Jesus to that nation in particular and to the sons of men in general: it was supreme ingratitude when that nation, alas, in this representing us all, would not receive him, but rejected the Lord of glory. I use our text as an illustration of the ingratitude of men towards our Lord, and it is upon that subject that I intend to preach at this time. I lay the charge against not only those who lived in Christ's day, but against mankind in general, against this assembly in particular, against myself also in sad measure. We have treated the Lord ungratefully, and have not rendered unto him according to the benefits received.

In commencement, we shall speak upon the fact that *those among whom Jesus lived were guilty of ingratitude towards him:* and then, secondly, coming home to ourselves, we shall dwell more at length upon the lamentable fact that *we too are guilty of ingratitude towards him;* and we shall close by observing *what then?* what follows out of this? what lessons are we to learn from it?

I. First then, THE PEOPLE AMONG WHOM OUR LORD DWELT WERE GUILTY OF INGRATITUDE TOWARDS HIM.

They were a favoured people above all nations. It was a distinguishing mark of divine favour that the Messiah should be born among them.

They ought to have received him with delight. His signs and evidence of Messiahship were clear enough. He wrought among them unexampled miracles, and he spake as none other man spake: yet they rejected him, treating their best friend as though he had been their worst foe. This was a high-handed act of national ingratitude.

Special cases occurred in our Lord's life involving still greater ingratitude. Among the people of Israel many became partakers of our Lord's healing power. Many eyes did he bless with light; into many deaf ears did he cause sound to enter; not a few lame men leaped as an hart at his bidding, and many that were sick of palsy and all manner of diseases were suddenly restored by his word. Yet the mass of these healed ones did not become his disciples, for the number of his male disciples, after he had ascended, was about one hundred and twenty; yet our Saviour had not healed one hundred and twenty merely, but, according to the evangelists, many hundreds—I might, without exaggeration, say many thousands had been partakers of his healing benefits. They were in their own persons testimonies to the Lord's divine power, and yet they did not worship him. Whence came this obstinacy of unbelief? Strange ingratitude this must have been, that a man should owe to Christ his eyes, and yet refuse to see in Christ his Saviour: that he should owe to Christ the tongue with which he spake, and yet should be silent in the great Physician's praise. Yet so it was, many were healed, but few believed.

We know, moreover, that our Lord fed thousands of hungry persons. He multiplied loaves and fishes, and fed crowds, so that they did all eat and were filled. For a time he was very popular with them, as anyone will be who has loaves and fishes to distribute; and they would have made him a king, for idle men much desire a monarch who will supply their needs, and relieve them from personal labour. Yet these persons had no affection for his person or doctrine, but followed him simply and alone for what they could get from him. Many of these selfish followers, doubtless, gave their voices against him and shouted "Crucify him, crucify him." They ate bread with him and lifted up their heel against him. Surely, after sitting at a table so marvellously supplied, reason itself would have suggested to every feaster that their host must be a prophet sent of God, if not God himself. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful that men receiving so much at his hands should still remain unbelievers in him.

The same treatment was dealt out to our Lord when he acted as the teacher of the people. He taught them pure truth in the best conceivable manner, and small indeed was his reward. They could not complain of his sermons that they were dull and unattractive, or that they were austere and devoid of sympathy. We never read that a hearer ever fell asleep under Christ's preaching, as Eutychus did under the lengthy discourse of Paul; neither were any terrified by his looks, as men have been by fierce fanatic leaders; his ministry was pleasing, and charmed the ear, yet it was ill requited. When his sermon at Nazareth was finished, what was his reward? They took him to the brow of the hill, and they would have cast him down headlong had he not escaped. When he taught the Jews in the temple, "they took up stones again to stone him." In return for his arguments of

mercy, they assailed him with the weapons of malice. Though, by declaring the glad tidings of salvation, he rendered to his hearers the most precious service, some of them in return sought to entrap him in his speech, and others gnashed their teeth in rage against him. He brought light into the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

Sometimes, when he found around him a more select audience than usual, the great Teacher would not merely preach the elements of the gospel, but would go more deeply into the mysteries thereof, but he had no thanks for so doing. On one occasion he spake to them concerning eating his flesh and drinking his blood, but he had cast his pearls before swine; they turned again to rend him, and many of those who had followed him up to that point forsook him, and walked no more with him. Even the disciples who were true at heart to him did not always prize his sayings well enough to keep them in their minds; and they were not influenced by his teaching and example so much as they should have been. How often must the tender bosom of our Lord have been wrung with anguish over human unkindness. The adder's tooth of unthankfulness left its print upon him. Men returned unto him evil for good, and for the heaped up measure of his benevolence they filled up equally high the measure of their hate. What a plaintiveness is there in that question which he asked after he had healed ten lepers, and only one of them returned to thank him,—"Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?" as if he had expected at least that they would thank him; it was the least they could do in return for so matchless a boon as deliverance from a deadly disease. Surely, whenever our Lord looked upon the handful of his followers he must have recollected the hosts upon whom he had conferred benefits, and said within himself, "Where are the nine?"

From that thankless generation the meek and lowly One received no recompense of love for his temporal and spiritual bounties. Here and there a grateful woman ministered to him of her substance, and now and then a thankful soul became his disciple; but, for the most part, there was no response to his love, save such as that which Jerusalem heard when for his tearful cries of compassion he received shouts of murderous hate, demanding that he should be crucified.

Dear brethren, the further our Lord Jesus Christ went on in life the more did he experimentally know the base ingratitude of mankind. He lived for them; in obedience to his Father he spent his whole life for men. He lived first for God's glory, and next for love of men. His meat and drink it was to do men good. He forgot himself, he utterly renounced all ambitious purposes, and gave himself away that he might seek and save the lost. As a mother devotes herself to her babe so did Jesus lay himself out for men; nay, no mother ever loved her babe as Jesus loved his own which were in the world; and yet, continually, in every way, men sought to take away his life, which was more valuable to them than it was to him; for it was for their sakes only that he continued still to live on earth. How often had he to escape their cruel hands, and, when his hour was come, how eagerly did they conspire to hound him to his death. One would have thought when the mob stood in the street of Jerusalem howling out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" that he must have been a common informer, who had betrayed

men for pelf, or a poisoner who had secretly tainted the bread of the people with a deadly drug, or a blasphemer who had profaned every holy thing; or a wretch whose character was doubly dyed in infamy. Instead of which, there stood before that furious crowd the meekest among men, the most inoffensive, and, at the same time, the most generous, the most self-denying, the most tender man of all of woman born. Yet, how lustily they cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" and, when the question is put by the Roman Governor, "Why, what evil hath he done?" they can give no answer to it, and, therefore, they drown the question with their shouts, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Oh, base ingratitude of men to recompense such a life as his with a cruel death.

At last that evil generation had its way with the Man of Sorrows and they took him after he had been scourged, and led him away to be crucified. We know well that he needed not have died even then. One thought of his could have averted the arrows of death; he had but to will it and the nails would have sprung from their places, and from the cross the Lord would have leaped into the midst of his foes, to their horror and dismay. He was dying for men; for men each pang he suffered, for men the thorn-crown, for men the nailed hands, for men thepierced side, for men the bleeding feet, for men the gall cup, for men the pain, and for men the thirst. "He saved others, himself he could not save." It was the greatest sacrifice that man had ever made for man, and yet how was it requited? The cruel crowd stood around him, and scoffed at his pains, they made jests upon his person, they insulted his faith, they mocked his prayers. O thou dear Christ of God, fain would we have covered thy sacred body from those lewd and brutal eyes, and sheltered thy tender spirit from those inhuman taunts, but so it could not be. Man is allowed to be infamous that thou mayst suffer to the uttermost, and, in so doing, redeem thy people. See the contrast, Jesus loves and man hates. He dies for sinners, and sinners insult him in his agonies.

When our Lord had died and had lain in the grave three days, and had risen again, his rising was for men. He might have gone into his glory if he had pleased, but he tarried for forty days to minister blessings to his people. The requital which he received from the Jewish people was of the same evil character. They doubted whether he had risen from the dead at all, and there were those who were base enough to invent that idle tale concerning the stealing of his body at night by his disciples. They laid imposture to the door of the Son of God, and charged the Perfect One with acting a lie. O man, how mad thou must be! What strange insanity of iniquity is this that thou dost thus requite thy loving Lord!

Methinks I hear a murmur among you, as though you said, "Ah, but this was the guilt of the Jews; the crime of unbelievers. All were not so cruel." But, surely, you have forgotten that in this ingratitude even those who were nearest to him had a share. Those who were his immediate companions were ungrateful to him. What think you of him who said when his Lord had been anointed by a loving woman's hand for his burial, that it was a waste? That what was given to anoint the King of glory might have been sold for much, grudging an offering to that divinely generous One, who had given up all for us? One would have thought that those who abode with him would

have unanimously delighted in every honour shown to him, and one is apt to imagine that they should oftener have interposed to screen him, if they might, from the ills of poverty, weariness, and want. Among them all was there not one who should have pressed hospitality upon him again and again, that he might no longer cry, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay my head?" At any rate, when it came at last to the dying struggle, should not his bosom friends have watched with him one hour? Might they not have guarded Gethsemane's gates when he left them outside the wall? And the three who came within a stone's cast of his grief, and could hear his groans, could they not have forborne to slumber? Must they sleep while the Lord is in an agony? He excused them, but could they excuse themselves?

The case of Judas was peculiarly afflicting to our Redeemer's sensitive soul. In him treason reached its climax and base ingratitude outdid itself. Yet Judas was an apostle, the keeper of his Master's purse, the friend who ate bread with him and lifted up his heel against him. Shame on thee, Judas! But, alas! thou art not alone; others follow thy hideous example, and some such may be among us. "Lord, is it I?"

But, where were the rest of the disciples? Did they not accompany their Lord to the judgment-seat and come forward and boldly bear witness to the righteousness of his character? Not one of them was there to do him service. "All the disciples forsook him and fled." One ventured where he saw his Master's ill-treatment, but he thrice denied him, and added oaths and curses, saying, "I know not the man." Thus acted those whom he had carried in his bosom and loved even to the end. Those to whom he had opened up his inmost soul, who had eaten with him his last solemn meal before his passion, untrue to all their protestations of affection, sought every man his own safety, and left him to his fate. Call you not this ingratitude? What is worse than the ingratitude of bosom friends and brethren? The indictment lies against all that were of his day with whom he came in contact, from the worst even to the best. Where is the advocate who will plead their cause? There was none faithful, no, not one. Ingratitude stained all.

II. Yet, let us not think severely of them and forget ourselves, for we, too, are in the same condemnation. This is our second point, WE ALSO HAVE BEEN UNGRATEFUL TO OUR LORD. While I have been turning over this subject in my own mind it has deeply affected me; but I feel quite powerless to produce it before you so that you shall be affected in the same manner, unless God the Holy Spirit shall now be pleased to melt your hearts. Remember, that to bring a charge of ingratitude against a man is a very strong thing to do. I would not like to be called untruthful, I should grievously feel it, but to be called ungrateful is equally as degrading. Can any accusation be more dishonouring? Ingratitude is a mean and despicable vice; he who is guilty of it is unworthy of the name of man. A soldier who had been kindly rescued from shipwreck, and hospitably entertained, was mean enough to endeavour to obtain from Philip of Macedon the house and farm of his generous host. Philip, in just anger, commanded that his

forehead should be branded with the words, "The ungrateful guest." That man must have felt like Cain when the mark of God was upon him; he must have desired to hide himself for ever from the gaze of man. Prove a man ungrateful, and you have placed him below the beasts, for even the brutes frequently exhibit the most touching gratitude to their benefactors. The old classic story of Androcles and the lion rises before us; the man healed the lion, and years after, the lion, being let loose upon him, crouched at his feet and acknowledged him as a friend. Only the most despised creatures are used as metaphors of ingratitude; for instance, we speak of the ass which drinks, and then kicks the bucket it has emptied, but we never speak thus of nobler animals. An ungrateful man is thus lower than the animals; inasmuch as he returns evil for good, he is worse than bestial, he is devilish. Ingratitude is essentially infernal. Ingratitude to friends is vile, to parents it is worse, to the Saviour it is worst of all. Therefore, what I shall have to say must not be received with coolness, as though the charge were a trivial one; it is a very serious matter that we should be open to an indictment for ingratitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear, then, and sorrow as ye hear, for I also mourn as I speak.

I lay the charge first against believers—against those of us who are Christians, and are therefore most indebted to Christ's love and grace.

And we will observe at the outset that every sin of the believer has in it a measure of ingratitude; for, since our Saviour has suffered by reason of our sins, we are ungrateful when we wander into sin; since he came to destroy the works of the devil, it is ungrateful to build again that which he has destroyed. Shall that very sin which was the murderer of our Beloved be harboured by us? The very thought is treason. Since these sins of mine were my best friend's worst enemies, and more to be blamed than the Jews or the Romans, would it not be a shameless want of love to make them my bosom companions? Our sins were the nails and our unbelief the spear; away, then, with them all! Brethren, if we do not watch most carefully against our besetting sins we shall be false to our Redeemer. If a woman saw her husband's murderer before her, and gave her heart to him, what should we think of her? May the Lord by his grace prevent us from being equally shameless. May grace enable us to take vengeance on our sins, because they drew down vengeance on our Saviour.

Saints are especially ungrateful to the Lord Jesus when they allow any rival to set up his throne in their hearts. He, "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely," deserves to be admired and adored by our souls, not only beyond all others, but to the exclusion of all others. If your hearts were capacious enough to hold a thousand times more affection than they now contain, the Lord Jesus would deserve it all; if our hearts were as wide as heaven, yea, as vast as seven heavens in one, Jesus having bled and died for us ought to monopolise all our love. Yet we must confess that a wife, a child, a friend will steal away our hearts. Ambition for position, love of pleasure, desire to please, joy in wealth, will invade and conquer a province of our hearts. Oh, base ingratitude, which allows us to set up Dagon in the temple where the Crucified One alone should reign! Oh,

wretched unfaithfulness, which pines after these fleeting things in preference to the eternal lover of souls! How common is this ingratitude! Do I address a single child of God but what must acknowledge, "I am indeed guilty"? I sorrowfully confess my own offences against the infinite love of Jesus in this respect, and will do so before God far more at large than here would be either fit or profitable.

How often, too, might we be charged with ingratitude when we lose large measures of the grace which we have already received. We have power given us at times by the Holy Spirit to rise above the dead level of man's ordinary life, and we climb the mountain, and stand upon a higher platform altogether. There are times with us when we love the Lord with all our hearts, when our faith mounts to assurance, and all our graces are bright and strong: but we come down from that mountain almost directly, our feet slide from the glorious elevation. It seems far easier to mount than it does to tarry aloft upon the wing. The Holy Spirit admits us into peculiar nearness to the heavenly Father, and then we act inconsistently and lose our communion, and come to follow afar off as so many do. We have the sweet flavour of divine love in our mouths, and yet desert the banqueting table—what is this but ingratitude? Is it not a slighting of the precious gifts of Jesus' grace? He permits us to lean our heads on his bosom, and we will not do so. He stands at our door and knocks, and we refuse to open to him. He calls us to take our fill of loves, and we turn to the poor husks of earth. Have we not grievously provoked him? Would he not long ago have divorced his unfaithful spouse, if it had not been true that he hateth putting away? Smite on your breasts, beloved, and confess your ill manners towards your best Beloved.

Could we, any of us, plead innocence if the charge were brought in another way, namely, that we render him but little service, and give him but lukewarm love? How much have we done for Jesus after all? How much have we ever loved him? how much do we love him now? I ought to have said how little, I must correct myself. If we hear of the death of Christ upon the cross, we listen to it as coldly as though it were a thrice told tale with which we had no concern. How is this? Are our hearts like an adamant stone? A silly story of a love-sick maid will bring tears to our eyes far sooner than the tragedy of the cross. If we did but see one of our fellow-creatures suffer but a millionth part of what the Lord of Glory bore for us, we should be moved infinitely more than we are now when Calvary is before us. Whence comes it? Is not this black ingratitude? Who can extenuate such want of tenderness? Our love to Jesus, is it love at all? When I read of some of the saints giving up all that they have, crossing the sea, penetrating into barbarous regions, bearing their lives in their hands, sacrificing comforts, and living day by day on the verge of death, amid fever and wild beasts, and all that they might honour Christ, I am utterly ashamed. What are we, my brethren? Unto what shall we liken ourselves? Like a Colossus such men bestride their age, while we, base things, hide our dishonourable heads for shame at our spiritual littleness. The love of Christ to us is like that ancient furnace which was heated seven times hotter, while our love is like a solitary spark which wonders within itself that it is yet alive. May the

Holy Spirit change this, and give us yet to glow and burn with sacred fire, like the bush in Horeb when it was aglow with deity.

The same humiliating reflections arise when we meditate upon the consecration, or rather non-consecration, of our substance to the Redeemer's cause. What a small proportion do the most of us give to his work, or to his poor! If you were to take the numbers of church-members, and the contributions to missions, you would hardly dare to say how little per head is given. It is so trifling, that it is rather an insult to the Saviour than an offering to him. Some hearers even try to cheat the minister whom they flock to hear, and evade every claim even from the church to which they belong. For the most part, when Christians take stock of what they have, and then calculate what they have given, they have great cause for shame. If our estimate of Christ's worth be according to our gifts to him, there are some who would not give twenty pieces of silver for him. To some these remarks are more applicable than to others; to many congregations more needful than to you, for, thank God, there are those among you who delight to honour the Lord with their substance; but these are the last persons to think that they have done enough—in fact, those who do most for Christ are the first to feel that they do far too little.

Furthermore, brethren, how often is ingratitude shown to our Lord Jesus by neglect of his commands. Some professors need to be driven to obedience. If you tell the man who earnestly loves Christ his duty, he is charmed to know it, and to attend to it at once; but love to Christ is so low in some professors' hearts that you must hammer the precept into them again and again, and again, and again; and yet will they linger long before they will fulfil their Master's will. They must be persuaded and threatened ere they will yield. Fervent gratitude runs with winged feet wherever Jesus bids it go. If we were more jealously obedient to our Lord, it would be evidence that we were more grateful to him.

Now, I feel, brethren, in my heart as if I would be glad to have done preaching, for I want to get alone, and sigh and weep this sermon over by myself. I want to confess and mourn apart over my own conscious ingratitude to my ever-blessed Lord, whom, nevertheless, I love. I do remember well the time when I imagined that if the Lord would only give me pardon through the atoning blood, nothing would be too difficult for me to attempt for his dear sake; and yet, though I have been cleansed from sins and accepted in Christ Jesus, I am too often sluggish in my Master's errands. Well do I remember when I first began to preach his word, I thought if I might but have opportunities of pleading with men for Jesus I would pour out my very soul while I urged them to flee from the wrath to come. Alas, although I am not altogether without zeal for God, my zeal falls far short of what it should be. Fain would I speak fire, fire which should melt your hearts, and then set them on flame with ardent love to Jesus. I cannot reach my own ideal and I doubt not that if I could I should be still faulty. I charge not you, my brethren, with ingratitude without confessing and acknowledging it in myself. Come, my brethren, let us not confess with our lips only, but with inward penitential grief; let us seek godly sorrow which worketh practical repentance. May we, in the power of the Holy

Ghost, resolve that we will love our Lord better for the future, and yield to the sweet constraints of his love.

Now, I have a heavy task, indeed, and that is to speak of some whose ingratitude to Christ is even greater, if greater can be, for they utterly refuse to trust him. I desire to speak with you to whom I have preached in vain these many years. The one topic of every Sabbath day in this place is Jesus Christ crucified. I have other things to say unto you, but this is repeated over and over again; and you are told without ceasing that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Notwithstanding all this, up to this moment many of you refuse to trust him, you "stumble at the word being disobedient," and you thus make the rock of salvation to be a rock of offence to you. If you deny it I will ask you, why then have you not accepted him for your Saviour? Why are you still alienated in your hearts from him? Perhaps your reply is that you do not think of these things. Is this, then, your conduct towards the dying Saviour, that you will not even think of him? Is he nothing to you? Do you despise his blood? Perhaps it is that you do not understand; then surely in your case it must be a wilful blindness of understanding, for the truth has been put before you as plainly as words could utter it, neither know I how I could have spoken more clearly. You have rejected up to this moment the Christ who died for sinners. Do you know what you have done? I wish he would stand here upon this pulpit at this moment, that you might see who it is that you have despised. See him with the ruby drops still glistening upon his crown of thorns, his face bruised, his countenance lined with grief, his eyes red with tears, his shoulders furrowed with the lash, his hands and feet wounded with the nails, and his side gashed with the lance—this is the man of sorrows whom you have refused! Look now on him whom you have pierced! Can you in his presence continue your rejection? Will you still bar your hearts against him? Will you now say to him to his face, "Son of God, bleeding for human sin, we will not trust thee. Son of man, dying in the stead of sinners, we will not yield to thee?" Yet you have said that in his presence, which is everywhere real, though undiscerned by eye or ear. With those eyes of fire which discern from heaven everything that is done on earth, he has seen you impudently refusing to be saved by him.

Alas, I have now to go further. Some have not been content with rejecting the Lord, but have gone the length of opposing him, have made his gospel the theme for jest, and treated his people with indignity. It always staggers me that men should treat the meek and lowly Jesus and his gracious gospel so roughly. There is something so tender and so meek about the Saviour, that I pity from my soul the wretch who had the heart to smite him in the face, or was so base as to insult with spittle that dear and sorrowful visage. Once in the sack of a city, when the fierce soldiery had commenced a general massacre, a little child was seized by a rough warrior, who was about to kill him, but stayed his hand when the little one said, piteously, "Please, sir, don't kill me, I am so little." Methinks the Saviour's meek and gentle manners might be a similar argument for staying the hand of wrath. Who can harm the harmless Lamb of God? Persecutor,

what evil has Jesus done to you? Reviler, what has he ever said to injure you? When has he given you an ill word or look? Ah, it is to his silence that you owe your life; should he accuse you, you would be undone for ever, yet he has not accused you to the Father, but has pleaded for your reprieve. Sometimes in our police courts you may have seen an inhuman husband brought before the magistrate for having maltreated the poor unhappy woman who is linked to him for life. The policeman has taken him in the very act of assaulting her, her poor sickly face bears evidence of his brutality; she can scarcely stand, for his cruelty has put her life in jeopardy. Watch her closely. The magistrate asks her to give evidence against the creature who has so cruelly injured her. She weeps and shakes her head, but says not a word. She is asked, "Did he not illtreat you yesterday?" She is long before she speaks, and then not a word is uttered against the husband whom she still loves, though there is nothing lovable about him. She declares that she cannot bear to appear against her husband, and she will not. What a stone must that man's heart be if he does not love her henceforth all her days. But, see a nobler counterpart. There is the Lord whom you have injured by your hard speeches and cruel mockeries. See you not his face all marred with your bruises, yet he does not accuse you to the Father, but when he opens his mouth to speak for sinners, he cries, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He must be ingratitude incarnate who can continue to use him or his cause despitefully. There is no chivalry, nay, there is no manhood, in the heart which treats despitefully one who neither provokes nor retaliates.

I must add, before I close this point, that some are ungrateful to Christ, from whom, above all others, such conduct ought never to have proceeded. The text says—"He came to his own, and his own received him not." In this very place the Lord Jesus has come to those who appeared to be his own. You, sir, were your mother's own boy, and she, now in glory, was an ardent lover of the Saviour, and when Jesus came to you he might have said, "This is the son of one of my dearest friends, the son of a woman whose whole heart was mine; surely her son will love me too." Yet you did not respond to him. Jesus has come to your house, and found there a wife who ardently loves him, and he might well have said, "Surely the husband of my handmaiden will receive his wife's friend." Yet, you have shut the door upon him. Possibly, I address an unconverted person who is not only the son of a Christian father, but the child of one of God's own ambassadors, yet he himself is an enemy to God. Surely a minister's children should be the Lord's, and yet ministers' sons and daughters have been seen amongst reprobates. I know not why it is, but sadly often has this been the case. Do I address one such? I pray that you may no longer be ungrateful to your father's God.

Ay, and there are some here who years ago were sore sick, and on the borders of the grave, and they said, "Please God we ever get up again, we will seek the Lord." You were thus in a sense "his own" by your own voluntary vow; but you have not received him. Again to-day the Lord Jesus comes to you, and shows his hands and side, and asks you why it is you break your promises to him? why it is you love not

your mother's Saviour? why it is you care not for your father's God? and what it is that has turned you against him? Many good works has he shown you, and for which of these do you stone him? He is full of love, and pity, and mercy, and power to save—for what reason do you reject him? May the Lord grant that these appeals may have power with you, by the voice of the Holy Spirit.

III. I close by answering the question WHAT THEN? What comes out of all this?

Why, first, let us appreciate the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must never lower our estimate of the bodily pains of Jesus; they were undoubtedly very great, but after all, his mental sufferings were far greater, and amongst the acutest of them must have been this, to be always treated with ingratitude by those whom he loved so well. Do I address here a tender heart which has bled from the stabs of ingratitude, a mother with an ungrateful son, a friend with a treacherous friend? You know that nothing stings more than unthankfulness, yet your Lord had to feel it day by day. He was ever more occupied in doing everything for men, and men on the other hand were doing everything against him. He was from day to day like Sebastian the martyr, who was bound to a tree and made the target for a thousand arrows. The archers sorely shot at him and wounded him, but his love abode in strength, and so remaineth to this day.

Next, admire the Saviour's love. When a man is kind and loving he will continue so until he meets with base returns, and then he is very apt to become indignant and stay the course of his benevolence. When we try to bring men together who have fallen out with each other, where ingratitude has been the cause of it, we use strong arguments. We have to say to the injured person, "You have been badly used, but labour to rise superior to it all. It is true that such ingratitude does deserve to forfeit your kindness, but do more than ordinary men would do, heap coals of fire on the ungrateful head." The Saviour knew that men would be unkind to him, he knew it all beforehand, and when men were ungrateful he did not merely hear their words, but he read their hearts, and he knew that their hearts were yet more opposed to him, yet he never turned aside from his course of love, he pressed on still through reproaches and shame and derision and every form of human evil till he had finished the redemption of his people. Admire his love and let it kindle in you love in return.

Dear brethren, see next the mighty power of the pardoning blood of Jesus. Jesus can take away even this scarlet sin of ingratitude. Though he came to his own, and his own received him not, yet to as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name. Have you rejected Jesus fifty years? Come to him even now, and he will blot out your sins in a moment. Have seventy years rolled over your guilty head, and have you remained deaf to all the appeals of mercy? Yet come and welcome, come and welcome. The gentle Saviour has not exhausted his pity. May his Spirit draw you now, and you shall find him as ready to receive you as he would have been fifty years ago. Admire the grace which continues to invite, and the efficacy of the blood which is still able to cleanse.

Another practical lesson is, let us see how we ought to forgive. If another man has injured me it is no reason why I should injure myself. Perhaps you do not see the application of that utterance. Well, here is the explanation of it. If I have loved a man and his only return is unkindness, shall I injure myself by leaving off loving him? After all, it will be a great injury to my heart to become unkind. If I have sought a man's good and he has only returned me evil, do not let me bring myself down to his level. Let me rather seek to rise higher; and because of his evil seek to do more good to him, then shall I be like Christ, for he did so; when our sin abounded, his grace did much more abound. In our Lord's life sin and love contested which should win the day. Man sinned yet more and more, and Christ loved yet more and more. On the cross he loved to the death and won the battle, and this day human ingratitude is beneath the feet of the conquering Saviour; love has won the day, and sin is crushed beneath its feet. O Christian, do battle in the same spirit, and the Lord help you to be more than conqueror through him that loved you.

Dear brethren and sisters, lastly, let us judge how we ought to live in the light of this subject. If we have been ungrateful up till now, shall we be so any longer? Nay, let us now on bended knee, with earnest soul cry to God to inflame us with something of the fire which set the Saviour on a blaze with sacred ardour for our good. Let us devote ourselves wholly to him. Let us cry, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar." What manner of people ought we to be who owe so much to the grace of God.

And, there is this mournful reflection, what will become of those who shall die after having lived a life of constant ingratitude to Christ? There is a limit even to his mercy, for death shuts the golden gate of love. Justice takes the place of mercy as soon as the impenitent man has closed his dying eyes. An excellent writer has well said that "Divine justice is love in flames," and so it is. When once love turns to jealousy, it is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are of juniper that have a most vehement flame. You may despise him whose feet were pierced, and reject the Saviour whose heart was opened with the spear, but he will come again, I know not when, but his word is, "Behold, I come quickly." Beware, I pray you, for in that day this shall be the word, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." In that pierced hand shall be a rod of iron, and he shall break his enemies in pieces like potters' vessels; his pierced feet shall be sandalled with light, and out of the mouth which now speaks promises shall come forth a two-edged sword with which to smite his adversaries. "Kiss the son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little." He will forgive you now, he waits to be gracious to you now. Mercy now rules the day. But, let the sun of mercy go down, and the blackness of darkness shall abide for ever. O provoke not the Lord! May his mercy turn your hearts by the power of his ever blessed Spirit, and unto him shall be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Psalm xxii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PERSEVERANCE WITHOUT PRESUMPTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 7TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."—John x. 28.

THOSE of you who were present last Thursday evening* will remember that I spoke then upon the necessity of "holding fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," and I showed you that it is only by continuing in the faith with which we began that we are proved to be partakers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let us speak as plainly as we may, we are always liable to be misunderstood. The most eager hearer may easily confound his thoughts with our words, and so attribute notions to us that spring up spontaneously in his own mind. Thus, I met this week with an earnest anxious enquirer who thought I had meant that though a man should be a believer in Jesus Christ, yet after all he might perish. I dare say some expressions I used led him to think so. Had he been long a hearer here, he would not have imagined that I could give utterance to such a statement; for all of you who hear me continually know that, if there is one doctrine I have preached more than another, it is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints even to the end. What I intended to say—I do not wonder that he did not quite understand me—was this: that the believer must always be a believer; having began in that confidence, he must continue in that confidence; the alternative would be that he draw back unto perdition, in which case he would perish as an unbeliever; and then the inference would be that the faith he seemed to have was a fiction, that the confidence he seemed to enjoy was a bubble, that he really never did believe to the saving of his soul. This is a fair argument, based on the operation of the Spirit of God; it is in no sense a condition dependent on the good behaviour of men. The one way by which a soul is saved is by that soul's abiding in Christ; if it did not abide in Christ, it would be cast forth as a branch and be withered. But, then, we know that they who are grafted into Christ will abide in Christ. We reason in

* Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,042. "A Persuasive to Steadfastness."

the manner of the apostle Paul who, when he had spoken of the danger that some were in that, having begun well, they should end badly—after being enlightened and tasting the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, they should turn aside, he adds, "But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." The question, however, having been mooted, it occurs to me that it may not be unprofitable if I state briefly—not by way of controversy, but simply for the sake of instruction—the doctrine of the security of the believer in Christ, the certainty of the believer's perseverance even to the end, and of his entrance into eternal rest. This text at once suggests itself to me—"I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

The three clauses of this sentence represent to us three gracious securities. Here is *a divine gift*—"I *give* unto them eternal life;" *a divine promise*, far-reaching and wide—"they shall never perish;" and *a divine holdfast*—"neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

I. First, then, observe THE DIVINE GIFT—"I give unto them eternal life." Eternal life comes to every man who has it as a matter of gift. He did not possess it when he first entered into the world. He was born of the first Adam, and born to die. He did not educe it or evolve it from himself by some mysterious processes. It is not a home growth, a product of the soil of humanity: it is a gift. Nor is eternal life bestowed as a reward for service done. It could not be; for it is a pre-requisite to the doing of service. The term "gift" shuts out all idea of debt. If it be of gift, or of grace, then it is no more of debt or of reward. Wherever eternal life is implanted in any person's soul, it is the free gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, not deserved but bestowed on the unworthy. Hence we see no reason why it should be revoked from the person who has received it. For, suppose there are certain disqualifications in the man who has participated in the gift, yet they cannot otherwise operate to his prejudice in enjoying the boon than they would have operated to his ever receiving it, if they had been taken into the account at all. The thing does not come to him because of any worthiness in him, but comes as a gratuity. There is no reason why it should not continue, since it has come into existence, or why the present tense, as we have it here, should not always be a present fact. "I give"—I continue to give—"to them eternal life." That cannot be affected by an unworthiness subsequently discovered, because God knoweth the end from the beginning. When he bestowed eternal life upon the man who hath it, he knew right well every imperfection and failing that would occur in that man. These demerits, had they been reasons at all, would have been a cause for the not giving, rather than for giving and then taking away again. But, it is inconsistent with the gifts of God for them ever to be disannulled. We have it laid down as a rule of the kingdom of which there is no violation, that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not rescind in caprice that which he has conferred of his own good will. It is not according to the royal nature of the Lord our God to bestow a gift of grace upon a soul, and then afterwards to withdraw it—to lift up a man from his natural degradation and set him among princes by

endowing him with a life eternal, and then to cast him down from his high estate by disendowing him of all the infinite benefits he has conferred. The very language I am using is contradictory enough of itself to refute the suggestion. To give eternal life is to give a life beyond the contingencies of this present mortal existence. "For ever" is stamped on the charter. To take it away were not consistent with the royal bounty of the King of kings, even if it were possible that such a thing could be. "I give unto them eternal life." If he gives then, he gives with the sovereignty and generosity of a king; he gives permanently, on an enduring tenure; he gives so that he will not revoke the grant. He gives and it is theirs—it shall be theirs by divine charter for ever and ever.

We may infer the certain safety of the believer, not only from the fact that this life is an absolute gift, and will not therefore be withdrawn, but from the nature of the gift, it being eternal life. "I give unto my sheep eternal life." "Yes, but," says somebody, "they lose it." Then they cannot have had eternal life. It is a solecism in terms to say that a man hath eternal life and yet perisheth. Can death befall the immortal, or change affect the immutable, or decay corrode the imperishable? How can life be eternal if it comes to an end? How can it be possible that one shall have eternal life and yet die with sudden shock, or drop as feeble nature fails of all her functions? No! eternity is not to be measured by weeks or months or years. When Christ says eternal, he means eternal, and if I have received the gift of eternal life, it is not possible for me so to sin as to lose that spiritual life by any means whatever. "It is *eternal* life."

We may reasonably expect the believer to hold on to the end, because the life which God has implanted within him is of that nature that it must continue to exist, must conquer all difficulties, must ripen, must perfect, must cast out sin from him, and must bring him to eternal glory. When Christ spake by the well to the Samaritan woman, he said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This cannot mean a transient draught that would slake the thirst for an hour or two, but it must imply such a partaking as changes a man's actual constitution and his destiny, and become in him a never-failing well-spring. For the life which God implants in believers by regeneration is not like the life which we now possess by generation. This mortal life does pass away. It is connected with flesh, and all flesh is like grass; it withers. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Not so the new life that is born of the Spirit and it is spirit, and spirit is not capable of destruction: it shall continue and last on world without end. The eternal life within every man who hath it was begotten in him "not of the will of man, nor of flesh, nor of blood, but of God" himself. Thanks be unto the Father, for it is of him that we are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Tracing this implanted life to its germ, we are said to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." It is a holy seed. It cannot sin, for it is born of God. We

are made partakers of the divine nature, and the new life within us is a divine life. It is the life of God within the soul of man. We become the twice-born, with a life that can no more die than the life of God himself; for it is, in fact, a spark from that great central sun: it is a new well in the soul which draws its supplies from the deep that lieth under; from the inexhaustible fountain of the fulness of God. This, then, is a second reason for believing in the security and final perseverance of the believer. He has a gift from Christ, and Christ will not withdraw his gift: he has a life which is in itself immortal and eternal.

But, further, this life within the believer which is a gift from Christ, is always in connection with Christ. We live because we are one with Christ; as the branch sucks its sap from the vine, so do we continue to derive our life's blood, our life's supplies from Christ himself. The union between the believer and Christ is vital and to the fullest degree assuring. For what does our Lord say of it?—"Because I live, ye shall live also." It is not a partnership which may be dissolved or a connection which may be severed; but it is a necessity that no accident can interfere with; it is a fixed law of being—"*because* I live, ye shall live also." That the union between Christ and his people is indissoluble appears obvious from the figures which are used to illustrate it. To such an overwhelming extent do they denote that there can be no separation, that we may well say, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Are we not married unto Christ? What metaphor could be more expressive? To estimate its value you must take the divine account of the relationship. For although weddings are secularised by our Acts of Parliament, and nuptial ties are looked upon as civil contracts, God has pronounced man and wife to be one flesh; yea, in the sight of heaven, he that is joined to a harlot is one body. If, then, in ordinary marriage divorce is possible, and, alas, too common; when you come to scripture, you find it written that he hateth putting away. He hath said, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever, I have betrothed thee unto myself in righteousness and in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." The marriage between our souls and Christ can never be dissolved. It were blasphemy to suppose that Christ shall appeal for a divorce, or that there should be a proclamation made that he hath put away that spouse whom he chose of old, for whom he hath prepared the great wedding feast, and for whose eternal bliss he hath gone to glory to prepare a place. No, we cannot imagine such espousals leading to a separation.

Again, are we not members of his body? Shall Christ be dismembered? shall he every now and then be losing one limb and another? Can you suppose that Christ is maimed? I scarcely like to think, much less to express the thought, of here or there an eye, or a foot, or an ear wanting to complete the perfection of his mystic person. No! it shall not be. Members of the body of Christ shall be so vitally quickened by the heart, and by himself the head, that they shall continue to live, *because* he lives. When a man stands in water, the flood might naturally have power to drown him, but as long as his head remains above water, the stream cannot possibly drown his feet or his hands; and

because Christ, the head, cannot die, cannot be destroyed, all the floods that shall come upon the members of his body shall not—*cannot*—destroy them.

Moreover, the life of the believer is constantly sustained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is a matter of fact under the gospel dispensation that not only is the Holy Ghost *with* believers but he is *in* believers. He dwells in them, he makes them his temple. The life, as we have shown you, is *sui generis*, of its own kind, immortal; it is immortal because united with an undying Christ; but it is also immortal because supported by a Divine Spirit who cannot be overcome, who has power to meet all the mischief of false and evil spirits that aim at our destruction, and who from day to day adds fresh fuel to the eternal flame of the believer's life within. Were it not for the Holy Spirit's abiding with us, we might be the subjects of some doubt, but as long as he continues to abide with us for ever, we will not fear.

The first consolation that we thus draw from the text is that we are the recipients of a divine gift—"I give unto my sheep eternal life."

II. Now, secondly, we have, added to this, A DIVINE PROMISE:—"They shall never perish." I am very thankful for this word, because there have been some who have tried to do away with the force of the entire passage—"neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "No," they have said, "but they may slip between the fingers, and though they cannot be plucked out, yet they may go out of their own accord;" but here is a short sentence that puts all such thoughts out of the question —"they shall never perish"—in his hands or out of his hands, under any supposition whatever—"they shall never perish." Observe that there is no restriction here; it includes all time. "They shall *never* perish." Are they young believers; their passions strong; their judgment weak? have they little knowledge, small experience, and tender faith? May they not die while yet they are lambs, and perish while they are so feeble? "They shall never perish." But, in middle life, when men too often lose the freshness of early grace, when the love of their espousals may perhaps have lost its power, may they not get worldly? May they not, somehow or other, then be led aside? "They shall never perish." "They shall never perish." Perish they would, could worldliness destroy them; perish they would could evil utterly and entirely get the mastery of grace, but it shall not. "They shall never perish." But, may they not grow older, and yet not wiser? May they not be surprised by temptation, as so many have been in times when they have become carnally secure, because they thought their experience had made them strong? "They shall never perish,"—neither if they are beginners, nor if they have all but finished their course. "They shall never perish." It shuts out all time—all reference to time, by taking the whole range of possible periods into the one word, "never." "They shall *never* perish."

No less does the sweep of the sentence include all contingencies. "They shall never perish." What, not if they are severely tempted? "They shall never perish." Not if they backslide? They shall be restored again. "They shall never perish." But, if they continue in backsliding and die so? Ah, that they shall not do. "They shall never perish." You must not suppose that which never can occur.

"They shall never perish." They shall never get into such a condition that they shall be utterly without grace; they shall never be in such a state of heart, that sin shall have dominion over them—utter and entire dominion. It may come in; it may seem for a time to get the mastery, but sin shall never so have dominion over them that they shall perish before the Lord. "They shall never perish."

It takes in all the flock. "They shall never perish,"—that is, not one of his sheep. This is not the distinctive privilege of a few, but the common mercy of them all; none of them—not one of them—shall ever perish. If thou, believer in Christ, art the most obscure of all the family, thou shalt never perish. If thou hast indeed received the inner life and true grace be in thy soul, though no one knows thy name and no one lends thee a helping hand; though, as a solitary pilgrim thou shouldst walk the heavenly road all alone, weak and feeble, and trembling all the way, yet thou shalt never perish. The promise is not to some, but to all the believing sheep of Christ. "They shall never perish."

And, beloved, it may greatly strengthen our faith and sweetly revive our spirits, if we consider how this doctrine harmonises with other doctrines which are most surely believed among us. Christ's sheep were of old chosen of God unto salvation. But, if they perished, the election of God would be frustrated. From the foundation of the world he appointed them that they should bring forth fruit unto holiness, even unto the end, and, if they do not, how can his will be done on earth as it is in heaven? They were a people set apart unto himself, that they might honour him by good works; did they fail of this, did they fall from their blest estate, did they utterly perish, the Father's counsel would be foiled; and that cannot be. The purpose of God secures their final perseverance. "They shall never perish."

We may rest assured that they shall be preserved because of the effectual redemption which Christ has wrought out for them. We believe, beloved, in this place, (though the doctrine is very much disparaged nowadays) in an actual and literal substitutionary sacrifice.

We believe that Jesus died for his people, and

> "Bore, that they might never bear
> The Father's righteous ire."

Now, if he paid their debts they have no debts to discharge. If he has borne their punishment, they have no penalty to suffer. If he stood in their stead, justice as well as grace—justice and grace together—demand that they should be saved. Jesus Christ has offered for them an atonement; and "who is he that condemneth"? "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that hath risen again." "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If he died to bear our guilt, much more, the atonement being completed, shall we enter into the fulness of rest. If he would not lose us, viewing us as unredeemed, but came and paid the price, much less will he lose us now that he hath redeemed us unto God by his blood out of every nation and people and kindred and tongue. He laid down his life for his sheep. He loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might present it unto himself

a glorious church; and he will effect the purpose for which he has already ventured so much, he will surely claim and as surely receive at the hand of justice the salvation of those for whom he was a vicarious victim.

Furthermore, dear friends, he that believeth in Christ is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. Is it according to the manner of man first to justify and afterwards to condemn? Certainly not, but if it were it is not according to the supreme equity of the Most High God. Has he pronounced a man just, just that man is. When he has declared the man's transgressions forgiven, shall they be again reckoned to him?—again laid to his door? Is it not said that he has put away our sins like a cloud, and will he gather the cloud of yesterday again? Hath he not said he hath cast our sins into the depths of the sea? Shall that which Jehovah himself hath consigned to the oblivious ocean be washed up again as though he had only committed it to the shallows? As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Our East and West are wide enough apart; but what must God's East and West be when he looks through infinite space! He has removed those sins so far from us, that the swiftest-footed devil could not bring them back again though he had a whole eternity to perform the feat. He hath put them away for ever. Yea, hear what is said of the Messiah,—"He hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness." If it is finished, it is finished, and if he has made an end of it, where is it? Where is it? "If it be searched for it shall not be found"—yea, it shall not be, saith the Lord. O beloved, how then shall the man that believeth in Christ be condemned—condemned for the sin that has been pardoned? How shall he be cast into hell? For what? For offences that have been borne by the Saviour? How shall he be condemned whom God has justified? Give no countenance to the thought. Let nor fear nor fancy induce you to lend an ear to the suggestion. The sentence of remission once passed upon a man stands irrevocable. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth."

In the believer, moreover, there is a work of God begun, which he has engaged to complete. It hath never been said of God that he began to build and was not able to finish. "We are persuaded that he which hath begun a good work in you will carry it on and perfect it to the day of Christ." It has not been according to Jehovah's wont to leave unfinished his works; why should he leave them unfinished? Is there a want of power? Inconceivable. Is there a want of will? We cannot imagine it; for if his will hath changed there must be some reason for the change. And if it be so, is God wiser than he was? Has he altered his plan because he has found out some error in it? If not, if infinite wisdom led him to put his hand to it, infinite wisdom will keep his hand to the work.

"The work which wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

O beloved, the very beginning of the work from God augurs that the work will be fully carried out.

The doctrine of adoption supplies us with yet another argument for our safety. Every man who is saved, justified, forgiven is also adopted into the family of God. And, dost thou think that God shifts and changes his children who are called by his own name? Dost thou imagine such a thing credible? Does it sound like a fact? Art thou thy Father's child to-day, and somebody else's child to-morrow? Is not the absurdity too obvious to need refutation? Nay; I know not whence could have come so whimsical a thought as that we should be children of God to-day, and by-and-by children of the devil, changing thus the blessed paternity which God himself claims as to all his people. "But, we may play the prodigal," saith one. Yes, I answer, and we may be brought back again after we have gone astray as the prodigal was. Besides; the prodigal was still a son; even when at the swine-trough, and when he had wasted all his substance in riotous living, he was still beloved of the father. And, because he was a son he came back again with weeping and bitterness of spirit, and found peace and pardon. Had he been no son, he might like others have spent his living with harlots, and there had been no saying, "I will arise and go unto my father;" but grace operated on his heart; he was quickened mysteriously, and he said, "I must leave this life of poverty and sin and go back to my father's house again." And, if God's child shall go astray, as it is possible, (only God grant you and I never may,) yet there is a voice that saith, "Return, return thou backsliding Israel. I am married unto thee, saith the Lord." Adoption is surely a grand proof that the Lord's people shall be kept and preserved; that there shall be an unbroken family of God in heaven. He shall not have to lament that his own dear sons and daughters, begotten by his grace, have utterly perished. Jesus *shall* say, "Here am I and the children thou hast given me."

III. And, now, the last point is THE DIVINE HOLDFAST—"None shall pluck them out of my hand."

Then all the saints are in Jesus' hands. They are not only in his heart, but in his hands—just as the high priests wore the names of the twelve tribes on the breastplates, and also wore them on the shoulders, too. The power, as well as the affection, of Christ shall preserve the the people of God. They are in his hands. "All thy saints are in thy hands." What a blessed place for us to be in—in the hand of Christ—always there!

But, does not our Lord intimate as if to forewarn us that a great many attempts would be made to pluck us out of that hand? Satan would do it; our own base lusts would do it; the ungodly would do it. The very air is full of tempters who would if they could pluck us away from Christ. We have, therefore, cause for great watchfulness, deep humility, but also for much thankfulness that we are placed where the tempters cannot reach us, for the promise assures us that none is able to pluck us out of Christ's hand. There is not power enough in legions of fallen spirits, if they were marshalled in battle array against one poor weak Christian, to snatch him away from Christ, yea, should they besiege him without intermission, like a vast herd of lions seeking to devour one lamb, the defence were so much stronger than the invasion that they could not pluck even that one out of Christ's hand. The destroyer has never yet celebrated

a triumph over the Redeemer. He is not able to hold up a single jewel of the Redeemer's crown and say, "Aha! aha! I stole it from thy diadem. Thou couldst not keep it!" He has no single sheep there to which he can point and say, "Ah, Shepherd of the sheep, thou couldst not keep them all! The strong were safe enough: they helped themselves, but this poor weakling could not help itself, and thou couldst not help it. Lo! I have borne it away from thee; thy flock, which is thy pride, is not complete; thou thyself as Shepherd hast a spot upon thy name, for thou hast lost at least this one that thy Father gave thee and whom thou hast purchased with thy blood." It cannot be; it *shall* not be. The powers of darkness have conspired for this and struggled for this, but they have not yet prevailed, nor shall they. None shall pluck them out of my hand. Oh, rest in the hand of Christ, rest quietly; now thou art there thou art secure, neither shall any pluck thee thence. As if he would make assurance doubly sure, and give us very strong consolation, he added, "My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." You can interpret the figure. There was Christ's hand and his people in it, and he shall shut it fast to hold them. But, then, that hand was pierced once, and so to make it doubly sure the Father clasps it with his hand, and so within a double enceinture the elect of God are held and embraced. There is the pierced hand of Jesus and there is the Father's almighty hand; so there are two hands to protect and defend them. Well may they now cheerfully defy all power terrestrial or infernal, ever to destroy them. They must, they *shall*, for ever rest in perfect security beneath the guardian care of the Man Mediator, Christ the Lord, and God the everlasting and ever blessed Father, who also takes them into his sacred keeping.

Do I hear any one object, saying, "Well, but if this be true, then may not a man live as he likes?" Sir, how canst thou ask that question? What dost thou mean by it? Dost thou mean, may a man live in sin? I have been trying to show that if a man is one of Christ's sheep, he cannot perish, by which I mean, he cannot live in sin, for that is to perish. When I maintain that he cannot live in sin as he did, and cease to be a gracious man; you ask me whether he will not henceforth sin wilfully because he is saved from his sins? You must surely misunderstand me. "But, may not a man fall? Now I have these checks taken from me, I may grow wanton." What checks? What checks? If I lay it down that a man who is enlisted as a soldier is always a soldier, how can you tell me I have taken away some checks? I see not how that can be. I have rather implied a great many strong incentives to virtue than offered a single pretext for vice. Certainly he is not to lay down his soldiership because he is enlisted for life in the service of his Lord. If he ever did lay it down, he never could take it up again. Could these fall away, it were impossible again to renew them to repentance. If God's work did fail, if Christ's atoning blood did fall short of its aim, there would remain no hope for them. The ground on which the dew that moistens the flowers descends, when it yields nothing but thorns and briars, is given up as worthless. Were a man in some fit of enthusiasm to profess that he believed the gospel, and then take a fit of libertinism and plunge into dissipation, you would all know what

to think of his sincerity. When the guilt of sin is removed, the love of sin is purged out of the heart; and when the Spirit of holiness is given, the love of holiness is infused into the heart. The man who truly believes begins a life of holiness, and from that life of holiness he will never utterly depart. I grant you he may be overtaken in a fault; he may be surprised with a temptation; he may stumble through weakness, or through lack of watchfulness: but he will be led back again into repentance: he shall not be allowed to perish. The life that is in him is immortal, a holy incorruptible seed, and it will continue to develop in spite of sultry heat or biting frost, blight or mildew, till it blooms in the perfection of life above. Says one, "Ah, sir, I hold no argument about your doctrine; my fear is for myself: I do not think I should live as I now do if I were not afraid of falling away." Is not that a suitable fear for the child of the bondwoman:—"Unless I do so and so I shall be sent into the wilderness with my mother Hagar." Very likely you will. But, I know this, I am the child of the free woman, that is Sarah, and I know my father will never send his child into the wilderness. What then; shall his attachment provoke my alienation? Shall I act shame because he appoints me to honour? Nay, nay, but because he loves me so, I will love him in return. I pray him to forgive my offences, but I will seek to do all that is possible to show that I realise the greatness of his love, and desire to make some poor return for it as best I can. Well, but, says somebody, are we not admonished with warnings against falling away? Certainly, and they are the most terrible that language can describe. Undoubtedly the Scripture paints the pilgrim's path as full of peril. It is not by creature strength that we can hold our own. Could the precious blood lose its virtue; did the blessed Spirit withdraw his influence; were the timely succour withheld, we have no resource. For all manner of sin there is a remedy; believe in Christ as a Saviour; but for apostacy there is no cure. If you trample on the one sacrifice, no second sacrifice will ever be offered. There is but one new birth. Regeneration is once and once only. "But why these warnings," say you, "if it cannot happen?" Remember God does not deal with his people as if they were blocks of wood or iron cast and run into a mould. We are beings with a will and a judgment, and God deals with us in that way. Now, if I have poison in my house and it should be needful for some reason or other that poison should be there, I do not intend that my children should ever have that poison or take it. Suppose me to be omnipotent and that I have power to prevent their taking it, yet I do not lock it up and put it where they could not possibly get it. I put it where they can get it if they like, and it will kill them if they do get it; but I tell them they must not take it; I describe to them the results that will follow, and I have such a loving power over my children's hearts—(suppose it to be so)—that they do not disobey me so as to take this poison. Though it be there and devils come into the house and tempt them to take it, yet they will not take it but put it from them. I should thus be making an exhibition to those who looked on, of the love to me that was in my children's hearts, and also of my power over my children's hearts, though I did not violate their wills, and did not make it impossible for them to destroy themselves.

Now, it is so here. Sin is permitted to be in the world—I do not know why—and God does not render it impossible for a man to go and commit any sin. The man might, he would, unless God's grace prevented; but God's grace is not mechanical in its action; it is not like a fetter, or a chain; it is not (as I have heard some say) dragging people to heaven by their ears. No, it is a mighty force; an omnipotent power, but quite consistent with free agency, it never operates contrary to the laws of mind; and God is glorified in this, that though his children be thus tempted, they do not run into fatal soul-destroying sin; they do not go into such apostacy from him as would be final and prove altogether destructive. They are kept by his gracious power—kept as men—drawn, but with cords of love —bound, but with the bands of a man. Do you object that "good men fall"? Good men do not fall so as to perish. Good men do fall, for they are men. The old nature is in them. But, the truly gracious man with all his sins repents, still believes, and with broken bones goes back to his Lord and proves himself to be still a child. The sheep may fall into a ditch, it will not roll in the mire as a hog would if it fell there. A sheep even when it falls into a ditch proves that it is a sheep still. There is a difference in the nature of it. When I have seen a child of God fall into sin, I have known that if he were a child of God he would hate himself for it, he would grieve over it, and could not be at peace and ease in it. Do you tell me of a Christian who lived in sin and seemed very happy? Be sure that he was no Christian but a pretender. He who can continue in sin and delight in it is no child of God. He that can go day after day into vice, or can tolerate in himself any known sin, has a spot which is not the spot of God's children. He has a mark upon him which never was yet and never shall be upon a truly quickened child of God. Be ye holy, for I am holy, is the voice which sounds in the saint's ear, and if he does not always obey it as he should, this is the complaining of his soul, and it makes him go weeping and lamenting before his God. But still, in the main it ever shall be, the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.

I have one word for any here who are unconverted, but would desire salvation. Do you know, dear friends, that one of the great leading thoughts of my young life, the master thought that brought me to the Saviour, was belief in the doctrine of final perseverance? Perhaps you wonder how that could be, but so it was. I saw while yet I was a lad many promising boys and lads who made total shipwreck early in their lives by falling into gross vices. I felt in my soul a loathing of the sins which I heard they had committed. I had been kept from them by divine counsels, by gracious interpositions, by parental teaching, and by pious example. Still I feared lest the sins into which these young men had fallen might master me. Such knowledge as I had of the depravity of my own heart led me to distrust myself. I was convinced that unless I was converted, born again, and received the new life, I had no safeguard. Whatever good resolutions I might make, the probabilities were they would be good for nothing when temptation assailed me, I might be like those of whom it has been said, "They see

the devil's hook and yet cannot help nibbling at his bait." But, that I should morally disgrace myself, as some had done whom I had known and heard of, was a hazard from the very thought of which I shrunk with horror. When I heard and read with wondering eyes that whosoever believed in Christ Jesus should be saved, the truth came to my heart with a welcome I cannot describe to you. The doctrine that he would keep the feet of his saints had a charm indeed for me. I thought, "Then if I go to Jesus and get from him a new heart and a right spirit, I shall be secured against these temptations into which others have fallen; I shall be preserved by him." I do not say that drove me to Christ: a sense of sin did that, but it attracted me to him. It was one of the beauties of his face that ravished me, that he was a faithful keeper of all souls that were committed to him; that he was able and willing to take the young man and make him cleanse his way and keep him even to the end. O young people, there is no life assurance like a believing in Jesus Christ.

"Grace shall preserve your following years,
And make your virtues strong."

I do not preach to you, to-night, a sandy foundation that will give way under your feet, but a rock to which you may continually retreat, in which you may always dwell secure. I do not present to you a salvation that may fail you under some stress of temptation, but a salvation that is strong, having in it "the sure mercies of David." He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved,—saved from sinning, from the guilt as well as the punishment of sin, and brought to heaven holy and meet for the inheritance of the saints. God grant you to be believers in Christ. Amen, and amen!

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UNTRODDEN WAYS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JUNE 23RD, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For ye have not passed this way heretofore."—Joshua iii. 4.

THEY had come out of Egypt, they had gone up and down in the wilderness, but they had not before crossed the Jordan. It was new ground to them, a new difficulty, and a new series of events lay before them. As a fresh emergency had arisen, they had new orders direct from the Lord their leader, and Joshua and his officers were busy going throughout the host to communicate the divine directions. Beloved, when it shall be our lot to come into new positions we shall always obtain renewed guidance from the Spirit of God, if we will but wait upon him for it and cry, "Show me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path."

It is a most important matter with all of us who are believers in Christ that our faith should be in a thoroughly sound condition. It is not only grievous to ourselves, but dishonouring to God, when our faith falls to a low ebb. To see a distrustful Christian is to see a man who is robbing God of his glory. Since the Holy Spirit so vehemently cries, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem," we may safely come to the conclusion that it is solemnly important that the saints should be comforted, and that for them to lose their comfort is a very grievous thing. He glorifies God most whose faith staggers least. To maintain faith in full vigour is therefore a most important matter. Now, there is one very severe trial of faith which will happen to us all, and probably has already occurred to most of us. It is that of a change of trials, a passing into new territory, an entrance into novel circumstances. There is a conservative tendency about most of us, so that we build our nest and would fain live and die in it. Even if we are ill at ease in our present circumstances, this feeling

> "Makes us rather bear the ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of."

Some spirits are given to change, and would almost leap from the pan into the fire, but others of us take root deeply and dread transplanting.

We know the present, and we dread the unknown to-morrow. We are familiar with wilderness tribulations, but we shudder at the Jordan, which lies before us, and the giants, and the chariots of iron, which are yet to be encountered. We are not given to change, but are far more likely to settle upon our lees. We would fain abide where we are, and make no experiment of novel circumstances.

This principle is so strongly developed in certain minds, that they have even been afraid to learn truths which are new to them. From the milk diet of their spiritual infancy they are unwilling to be weaned, even though strong meat awaits them. They were not taught certain sublime truths in their early days, and, therefore, they wish not to be instructed now. Like the aged man in Solomon's proverb, they are afraid of that which is high. The doctrine of election—they see how full of comfort it is, but not having heard it preached before, they feel afraid to hear it and accept it now. That "wine on the lees well refined" they will not drink, because heretofore it has not been poured into their cup.

We have known such persons to be suspicious of spiritual attainments; they have been so long victims of doubts and fears that they are now afraid to believe; as for full assurance, they are as much alarmed at it as if it were a crime rather than a grace; they regard it as dangerous presumption, and put it far from them. Holy courage, brave reliance upon God, fervent zeal, confidence in prayer, unspeakable joy—these and such like blessings are to their timorous souls perilous things which had better be let alone. The high attainments which some of God's people have possessed, of access to the throne of grace, of close communion with God, of insight into the secret of the Lord—these things our dear brethren have thought to be too good for them, too precious for present enjoyment; and they have even suspected that those who profess to enjoy them were likely to have been deceived, or were carried away by carnal excitement. Because they have not yet gathered the grapes of Eshcol they will not believe that such clusters exist; because they had not passed this way heretofore they doubt whether there is, indeed, a highway of holiness undisturbed by ravenous beasts.

This fear of that which is new is more powerful still when we are called to enter upon new labours. We become accustomed to our present service, which at first was difficult; continual exercise therein has made it easy to us, and, therefore, when the Lord calls us to something else, we are afraid to venture. We feel as if we were quite competent for the work we are now doing, whereas we ought to know that even there "our sufficiency is of God," and we are not able even in that to do anything as of ourselves; but we are afraid to sail upon seas which we have never navigated before, even though our unerring Pilot steers the ship in that direction. Like Jonah, we would sooner go to Tarshish than bear testimony for God in the streets of Nineveh; and, like the man of God at Horeb, we complain that we stammer and are slow of speech, and we are ready to forego the honour of the Lord's service if we may escape its responsibilities. Ah, dear brethren, this is of the flesh, it is altogether contrary to the course of faith; yet how frequent a temptation it is with the people of God!

And, beloved, when this fear takes the shape of a foreboding of coming trial, it is even more common and crushing. We have sometimes to look forward to a period of sickness. Already it may be the disease has commenced to prey upon us; already consumption has weakened our strength by the way, or a more acutely painful disease is tearing at our vitals, and, therefore, we naturally expect that month after month our pain will greatly increase, and come to an alarming height. When death appears to be near, we persist in imagining that there is something terrible about departure out of this world unto the Father. Though tens of thousands of Christians have passed away with songs upon their lips, yet are we still afraid to ford the stream; though Jordan's banks have been made to ring ten thousand times with triumphant shouts, yet still we linger shivering there, and think it a dreadful thing to die. Forebodings, then, of pain, decay, and death, too often haunt us because we have not passed that way heretofore.

To many the fear of poverty is very bitter; they dread the infirmities of old age; they are dismayed in prospect of the desertion of friends, or the loss of beloved relatives in whom their heart is wrapt up. All these things, because as yet we are new to them, are apt to exercise an influence over our faith of the saddest kind. To help those who are so exercised shall be my aim this morning, hoping that the Lord may have sent by me comfort for his mourners, to make the faces of his afflicted to shine.

First, we shall utter certain words by way of *consolation;* then, others by way of *direction*; and, lastly, a few more by way of exciting *expectation.*

I. First, let us consider thoughts suggestive of CONSOLATION. Let us turn first to the case of the children of Israel. They were certainly where they had never been heretofore. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, none of them had even passed the Red Sea. They were a fresh generation, born in the wilderness, so that they had not the recollections of the Red Sea as a preparation for their present circumstances. They saw before them now a river which was full to the brim, owing to the melting of the snows of Lebanon; it was both deep and broad; how were they to cross it? They had no apparatus, there was not a boat in all their tents. Suppose they did cross it, there was a walled city within view frowning upon them on the other side, and behind the walls were many powerful and ferocious enemies. Suppose they should conquer the men of Jericho, the whole land was full of cities equally strong, "walled up to heaven" they said, and therefore, apparently impregnable. Their case was one that might naturally excite a thousand fears; but faith drove all fears away. God sent them his consoling word at the time when their faith was about to be tried; and, sustained by its power, they did not show the slightest sign of wishing to turn back, but they advanced straight on at God's bidding, and the Lord came to their rescue by drying up the river, casting down the walls of Jericho, routing their adversaries, and ultimately giving them the whole of the land from Dan to Beersheba as their inheritance. Now, are you in such a case as that? Are you just now where you have never been before as to trial? Are the demands upon your strength more heavy than at any former period of your career? Is there now a tax

upon your faith such as never exercised it before? Come, then: let us talk together, and may the words be words of comfort.

Remember, whether your way in Providence be new or old, *it is not a way of your own appointing.* A higher power than yours has led you to your present standing place. The people of Israel could have said, "We removed from this place to that, and from that to the next, but we never went without being led on by the fiery cloudy pillar; and here we are just at the brink of Jordan, but we did not come here in a wilful spirit, but we were guided here; Jehovah himself went before us." Feeling this they felt secure, and we may unite with them. Surely the Lord cannot make mistakes; eternal wisdom cannot err. Your path, my dear brother, and the path of all the saints, has ever been directed by the unerring skill of the great Father, and therefore it must be right. Providence cannot have placed us in a wrong position; it must be right for us to be just where we are; ay, though the armed men were binding us to cast us into Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, heated seven times hotter than before, we are in the right place if God has brought us there. He has never erred yet, either in guiding a star in its orbit, or in directing the chaff from the winnower's hand, and he cannot err in steering the course of one of his people. "Say ye unto the righteous it shall be well with him;" for "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way." "My times are in thy hand." Desperate, therefore, though your position may appear to the eye of fear, yet faith knows that God has put you in the best possible position for you to be in at this moment. If it were better, taking everything into account, for you to be in heaven to-day than where you are, you should be there. God will do the best possible thing for his people. If it were better for them that there should be no devil and no death, there should be neither devil nor death, but to heaven should they be caught up at once. Infinite, unspeakable, boundless love arranges all our pathway, and infinite wisdom joins in the decree.

Note, again, *your present pathway is new to you, but it is not new to your God.* Everything that happens to-day, or will happen to-morrow, is new to us, because we can only live in the present moment; and even though we endeavour to project ourselves a little forward, yet it is generally in a wrong fashion, so that we do not see the truth of coming events, seeing not, but only imagining that we see. But all things are present to the eye of God. To-morrow—there is no such thing with Jehovah! Yesterday—there is no such thing! Past, present, future—these are human words! "NOW" is God's word, and it comprehends all. He who should look upon a country from a star, taking a bird's-eye view, would have all parts equally before him, while he who traverses it with slow step leaves a portion of the territory behind him, and another part is yet before him. So is it with man. Creeping like an insect from leaf to leaf he leaves something behind, and has something yet before; but God looking down upon all things at once, serenely fills his own eternal "Now," and sees our ages pass. The peculiar troubles of to-day, which are exercising you, dear child of God, your heavenly Father was cognisant of ten thousand years ago; and nothing about them comes upon him by surprise. The Lord has no emergencies; he is never at the end of his resources. O

beloved, it makes my heart smile while I mention such a notion ; it is a childish folly, indeed, to think that the infinite God who filleth all, and sustains all, can ever meet with anything that to him shall be hard. Rest, then, O fellow pilgrim, in this confidence, that the new road to you is an old road to God.

Moreover, there is one view of this thought which ought to be very encouraging to the sorrowful, namely, that he who is at your Father's side, the Man of love, the Crucified, has, in his practical sympathy with you, actually trodden this pathway of yours. That God has seen it is consoling, but that Christ has trodden it is richest comfort.

"In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows bears his part."

You may see all along the way the blood-stained footsteps of him who gave his feet to the nails. Right down to Jordan's brink, and through the flood, and up the hither shore, there are the marks of the goings of him who loved the sons of men and bore their sorrows in his own person for their sakes. Courage, my brethren; where Jesus has been we may go. He leads us through no darker rooms than he went through before, and his having gone through them has sown them with light. We thought them novel places of trial, but they are no longer so since our covenant head has traversed them.

Remember, also, *the trials which seem new to us are not new to God's people.* Joshua said to the tribes, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore;" but then their forefathers had gone through the Red Sea, which was much the same thing, and perhaps on a greater scale still. Do not, therefore, say or imagine that your woes are peculiar. Others have suffered as much as you are enduring. Ask your fathers, the elders of the Christian church, whether these griefs of yours are new, and they will smile and tell you that they have done business on the same deep waters, and that the waves and billows which go over you have also covered their heads. Dream not that a strange thing has happened unto you. If it be strange to you it is only to you strange, for the rest of God's saints have suffered the same.

But suppose our position should be new, the labour new, the affliction new, *it is no sort of reason why it should be any the more dangerous.* It is folly to be alarmed at new things, because they are new. There may be less danger, my dear brother, after all, in the trial you dread than in that which you are bearing to-day. You dread poverty, do you? It is an evil, but it may not be such an evil as that which at this present moment bows your spirit down. Care to keep abundance is more gnawing to the heart than the scantiness of penury. Poverty in the experience of God's people has proved to be an evil in the midst of which men are capable of great rejoicing. You tremble at approaching sickness. But peradventure there will come with the sickness such joy unspeakable to your soul, that the spiritual joy will far outweigh the increased bodily infirmity. It is clear, then, that a change is not always for the worse, and altered circumstances do not necessarily involve more burdens. Your trial is new, but not therefore the more perilous. Go on, and be not alarmed.

And suppose that being new, it were dangerous; one thing is very

clear, namely, that *fear will not diminish the danger*. To fret, and worry, and mistrust, will that prepare you for what is coming? Will it help you to lie on the sick bed and be patient, if you now begin to fret because you are going to be bed-ridden? Will it aid you to die to begin this day to "feel a thousand deaths in fearing one"? No, brother, if the worst come to the worst, nothing can sharpen your sword so well for battle as faith in the ever-living God. What if I must weep to-morrow, yet will I sing to day, and mayhap my song will gather such force, that some of its stanzas will overleap to-morrow, and I may sweeten my sighs with my psalms. While we may, let us rejoice in the Lord, and not begin to exercise ourselves about unborn troubles. I saw in the monastery of the monks of La Trappe a few days ago, a grave which they had dug in their garden; not that any one of them was dead, but it was a profitable and amusing exercise to take a turn at digging the grave of some friend who might die. A happy family, truly, in which the brothers have a grave in readiness for the next who shall depart. I would like to have filled the hole up at once, for surely it is time enough to dig graves when our friends are dead, and even so it is time enough to prepare for troubles when troubles come. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" is the voice of inspiration. Let us not import from to-morrow the miseries which God has mercifully screened us from to-day.

Further considerations may also console us. *Hitherto and up to this moment we have found our God to be faithful to us.* These present crosses which are now upon our shoulders, we say we would rather always bear them than have new crosses, but is this wise? Do you not recollect when these very crosses were themselves new? They fit our shoulders now; somehow or other we have adapted our back to the burden, or God has adapted the burden to the back, and we do not like changing the load, though a few years ago we were just as reluctant to bear it. Our present crosses were new once, and God gave us strength to carry them. To-day's grief will only be new for to-day and for a little time to come; it will soon grow old if we live long enough, and we shall become as used to the new trial as to the old. As to-day we have learned to wing our way joyously under the broiling sun of summer, so by-and-by we shall sit upon the bare bough in the desolate winter and cheerfully sing of the coming of spring. Press on, press on, ye warriors of the cross; the new foes shall be as the old. The novelty of sorrow is but of the hour; the hour will wear it out as it wears out itself, and we shall receive strength to bear up under all.

Moreover, beloved friends, should we become distrustful while passing by a way which we have never trodden before, if we recollected *that progress implies a change of difficulties and trials?* Who wants to be like a blind horse going round a mill for ever and ever, feeling the lash of the same whip at the same place, and dragging the same machinery round without advancing? No, let us advance. And what if in going on we meet with sterner trials? then so let it be, for we shall receive richer grace. Towards the heaven of God we vehemently desire to make progress by his grace. The trials of manhood are not at all the same as those of a child. There are diseases of childhood from which we are quite free when we come to manhood; and there are difficulties and

trials both of the body and of the mind which will come upon us in riper years which children know not, yet we are very glad to get out of childhood and into manhood. When a stroke means knighthood no one wishes to avoid it, and if trial brings higher degrees of grace who desires to shirk it?

Perhaps I should weary you were I to continue much longer in this strain, but let me remind you that if there come new trials *they generally end the old ones.* It is quite certain that if we are troubled with a west wind, if a rough east wind should blow, we shall not be troubled with the west wind any longer. Heat and cold will not both torment us at the same moment. When the children of Israel were in the desert they had one set of trials; there was the hot sand beneath their feet, and the Amalekites pursuing them and attacking them; and, therefore, at any rate whatever there might be in Canaan, they would be out of the desert and away from desert inconveniences. If they had the Gergashites to fight with there would be no Amalekites. So there is something of gain to be set over against any possible loss. Let every child of God recollect that. When the Lord calls us to a change of position, and brings out a new burden, he removes the older load. We shall not to-morrow be pressed with the weight of to-day. I do not know what my trials may be seven years hence, but I do know that the trials of the month of June, 1872, will not then disturb me. When we bow beneath the infirmities of age, we may rest assured that we shall not be annoyed by the temptations of boyhood, nor molested by the vexations of middle life. In advancing, there are prospects of gain as well as of loss.

Moreover, although we have not passed this way heretofore, *the path runs in the right direction.* The children of Israel had their faces set towards the Promised Land. If they had been called to cross a Jordan which led them into the bondage of Egypt, there would have been something to distress them; but they were travelling to the land of brooks and rivers, which flowed with milk and honey. Men of faith among them would say one to another, "We pitched our tent each night all through the wilderness a day's march nearer to our rest, and now there is only one more day between us and the land of promise, therefore let us not fear." How brave they must have felt when Canaan was just in view. Courage, brothers and sisters! The way may be rough to us, but it is the King's highway, leading to the New Jerusalem.

"Yet the dear path to thine abode
Lies through this horrid land,
Lord, we would keep the heavenly road,
And run at thy command.
Our souls shall tread the desert through
With undiverted feet,
And faith and flaming zeal subdue
The terrors that we meet.
Our journey is a thorny maze,
But we march upward still;
Forget the troubles of the way,
And reach at Zion's hill."

II. In the second place a few sentences of DIRECTION. Wherewithal shall a man be guided when he comes to a way which he has not passed

heretofore? When our way is devoid of familiar foot-prints, what shall we do?

The first direction is this: *be most concerned to hear the word of the Lord, and obey it.* Notice that this chapter seems taken up with "The Lord said unto Joshua," and "Joshua said unto the people of Israel." It must have struck you in reading it that it is full of commands. The only details are the taking up of the stones of memorial, heaping them on the shore, and the setting up of other stones in the Jordan: otherwise, all the verses are repeated commands from the Lord, and the record of the nation's obedience thereto; from which we may gather that in time of trouble our chief enquiry ought not to be—"How should we get through this?" but, "What is our duty while we are in it?" "How would God have us act under these circumstances?" Depend upon it there is no temptation more perilous than that of supposing that self-preservation screens us from duty, and that obedience may be suspended while we provide for ourselves. Remember the words of the hymn—

"'Tis mine to obey; 'tis his to provide."

Would you take the Lord's work into your own hands? You cannot do it. Attend to your own. If you were at this very moment in the worst trouble that ever befel a son of Adam, I do not believe wiser advice could be given to you than this: "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Be it yours to hear what God the Lord shall speak, and to do what he bids you; all will come right then. The chief point in every dilemma is to wait till you hear the Master's voice.

The next direction is, *distinctly recognise the presence of the covenant God of Israel with you.* The ark which went before the people had three-fourths of a mile of distance between it and the people, in order that they might see it, because had they been nearer to it the front rank might have seen it, but the rest would not; but now there was a space put between it and the people that they all might see it before them as they went on their march. We never travel so sweetly over the rough ways of this life as when we see that God, the living God, the God of the covenant, the God of the mercy-seat, the God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the God of the reconciliation by blood, is with us and fulfilling his promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Is God with us? What more do we want? Omniscience, omnipotence, and infinite love, are all these leading the van? Then we will not fear to follow, though it were into Hades itself; for if Jehovah led the way his saints would be safe even there. Treasure up that direction. Do not think so much of the presence of friends in trouble as the presence of God in trouble. "Fear not,"—what is the next word?—"I am with thee: be not dismayed,"—what is the next sentence? "I am thy God." The richest consolation you can have is that which is derived from the presence of the Lord God of the covenant.

Note the third direction. *Dismiss from your soul the anxiety which arises from the idea that you are the keeper of the divine life within your soul.* "Strange direction," say you. Yes, but let me explain it. When the children of Israel marched through the wilderness some tribes

were before and some were behind the ark, as if they were guarding it; but on this occasion the ark went far ahead of them, as though God had said, "You my people are no protection to me; I guard you." Now in the time of danger the priests who carry the ark advance into the very teeth of the enemy, and into the bed of the Jordan, and there they stand, as though the eternal God threw down the gauntlet to all the hosts of Canaan and said, "Come and contest it with me if you can. I have left my people behind; I alone will meet you; I have come up alone, unattended, and I defy you all." It will often happen that in the time of trouble our worst fear is this: "I am so afraid that I shall not be able to preserve the grace of God in my heart." Get rid of that, dear brother, for the right question is not. Will you preserve the grace of God? but will the grace of God preserve you? Man, be assured of this, that God's grace will take care of him upon whom it lights. There may be a sense in which we are to preserve the divine life, for there is a watchfulness which each man must render to his own soul; but far higher, and above that, is the truth that the Lord is our keeper, the Lord is our shield upon our right hand. The Lord himself will go before you; he shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings shall you trust; and instead of saying in such a trial, "Shall I be able to keep the grace I have?" rather say, "I have received the grace of God, and it will sustain me, and make me more than conqueror."

As further directions let me briefly say, beloved, if you are now about to enter into a great trouble, *do not hurry*, make no rash haste. We often, when we are afraid of a thing, dash into it like a moth dazzled by the candle's flame. We become so disturbed in our minds that we do not act wisely and prudently, but fall into that haste which brings no good speed. The children of Israel did not rush pell mell to Jordan to swim across, but they waited while the priests went on before, and tarried till the ark stood still in the midst of Jordan. Everything was done deliberately. Ask grace to do the same. Be calm. If the grace of God does not make us calm in the time of peril and suffering, we have some reason to question whether it is healthily operating upon our spirits at all.

But next, while you do not hurry, *do not hesitate*. Not one man of all the tribes said, "I must wait and see others cross, and know whether the road really is open." At the moment the trumpets sounded the advance they all went on, asking no questions. A brave man that first priest must have been who went right up to the brink of Jordan and put down his foot. It must have been a noble sight to see the water suddenly roll right away in curling waves till it made a great wall of sparkling crystal up towards the right. He was a brave man who stepped there first and passed along the novel way which God had newly fashioned. His was the first foot which had trodden the bottom of that ancient river, the river Jordan. Be brave, also, my dear brother, and go straight on, though it were a river of fire instead of water. If Jehovah bids you the way is right, hesitate not.

There is one direction which we must not omit, because it is put by itself for special observance—it is this, "*sanctify yourselves*." Whenever we are in new trials a voice speaks out of them, saying, "Sanctify

yourselves." I suppose the Israelites washed themselves with water and practised the ceremonial rights which made them clean; so the child of God should come afresh in time of trouble to the precious blood of Christ. He should also ask for grace that he may purge out the old leaven. Our trials are not punishments, for all the punishment of sin was laid on Christ, and God will not punish us for whom Jesus was a substitute; but they are sent as paternal chastisements, and also as loving hints and indications to us that there is something in us to be put away. What is the voice of your present trial, beloved? What is the voice of the trial that you are dreading? I cannot interpret its special note, but I know that its general meaning is this, "Sanctify yourselves." Do we expect soon to be laid aside from active service? Then let us work for Jesus while we can. Do we reckon upon speedy death? Then let us with both hands serve the Master in the vineyard while life remains to us. May we be more than ever set apart unto God. If we expect poverty or desertion of men, may we feel that the Lord is weaning us from the poor dainties of earth, that he may fill us with the ineffable delights of heaven. "Sanctify yourselves." That is the voice of God to every man who is led by a way which he has not passed heretofore.

III. Lastly, a few sentences by way of exciting EXPECTATION.

Before us rolls this river, full to its brim; beyond the river, contention and strife await us; let us lift up our hearts to God and trust him, and what shall then happen? Why, first, *we shall discern the presence of the living God.* Did you notice in this chapter how Joshua puts it in the tenth verse? "Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you." The men of this world have no living God. They will hardly endure the name of God; they talk of *nature*, the forces of nature, the laws of nature, and so on. They have banished the Lord from their philosophy. I am afraid there are some professing Christians with whom things go so smoothly, that they seldom recognise the hand of the living God. Now, O tried believer, that you are coming into a new trouble, shall you know that there is a God, a God who acts, a God who interposes for his people, and actually works for them. We have not a God who will hear and then refuse to put out his hand to help us; who will look upon us, but will not come to our succour. You might have continued in your present circumstances without discovering what you know now, namely, that the Lord whom you serve will deliver you with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. Anything which gives us an opportunity to see our God is worth having. Even the light of the fiery furnace, if no other light can reveal that fourth who is like the Son of God, is a precious light. It is worth while treading the blazing coals to have a visit and a sight of that mysterious but beloved personage. Thank God that trouble is coming, for now, as through a glass, shall you behold the glory of the Lord.

What next will happen then? Why, in all probability *the difficulty in your way will cease to be;* for while the children of Israel saw the living God, they also saw a totally new and wonderful phenomenon. The Red Sea, it is true, had been dried up, but that generation had not seen it. It was a new thing to them when the river Jordan was made dry for them to march through it. I have seen in my short life

some very singular and remarkable things, but I cannot now narrate them. I have often heard persons say, in reading "*Huntington's Bank of Faith*," that it was a Bank of Nonsense. I do not believe it. I think there is much in that that any Christian man could have written, and I believe that if many of us were to detail our experiences, they would be quite as wonderful, and that others would say of them, "We cannot receive it, there must be some colouring about it," and the writings of novelists are not one half so interesting as the actual lives of Christians would be, if they were written out at length. God does interfere in ways which could not have been prognosticated by those who best understand the science of probabilities. You do not know what is going to happen: a trouble is coming, it will come, but there will come with it a mercy which will swallow it up. "The flood," say you, "the flood is before me, it overflows its banks." It is there and yet it is not there, for lo! when you shall come to it it shall have disappeared.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

It has been well up till now; it shall be well to the end. You have not a changing God to deal with; remember that. Shall the God of our childhood, who nursed us when we could not help ourselves, leave us when we come to second childhood? God forbid. Shall he who loved us before the world was leave us when we come into peril? It cannot be. "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Rest assured of this, that God has resources you have never dreamed of, and difficulties shall only put you into a position to see new displays of Jehovah's power and grace. God flings down the challenge every day to Satan and to sin, and says, "Here is my child; I put him in a new position to-day; see if you can overcome him now." To-morrow God will issue the same challenge, and so on to the end. Perhaps this new trouble has come because Satan has said, "Put forth now thine hand and touch his bone, and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face;" but God is saying, "Try him, try him," only with this view, that he may get glory by causing our weakness to overcome all the strength of hell through grace divine.

Is this all that we have to expect? No, beloved, we shall see such deliverances that *we shall be prepared for future trials*. Observe this, Joshua said, "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites." Sometimes a trouble when we are marvellously brought through it, becomes a kind of stock-in-trade for us; we look back upon it when the next affliction comes, and we say, "No, I am not afraid; the God who helped me on that occasion can help me now." How we may bless God for great afflictions, for now all that are coming will be little troubles in comparison. He has brought us through the Jordan. Come on, ye Hivites! Come on, ye Jebusites! Come on, ye Gergashites; behold God has given you as driven stubble to our bow; we will drive you before us, and say destroy them, for he who divides the Jordan is a God

with whom nothing is impossible. Be glad then, beloved, if the Lord strangely exercises you; he is trying your muscles and bracing them up for greater feats; as sacred athletes, ye shall do marvellously in the presence of that crowd of witnesses who compass you about. Rejoice and be glad that thus the Lord prepares you more fully to glorify his name.

Lastly, and this is best of all, and will please the children of God most—all that is coming to you *will magnify Jesus in your eyes.* On that day when Israel went through the river God began to magnify Joshua; and oh, when we pass through deep waters of affliction, how the Lord magnifies his son Jesus in our souls! Jesus is very dear to every child of God, but to the most tried he is the most precious. You who have had him with you when every one else has left you, know what a dear friend he is; you who have been nursed by him when your bones have come through your skin, know what a beloved physician he is; you who have been succoured, and fed, and led, and guided by him when all around has been a wilderness to you, know what a good shepherd he is; and you who have been upon the brink of death and have seen all things melt away, know how blessedly he is immortality and life, and what a fulness dwells in him sufficient to fill the soul when all created joys are gone. O Lord God, if it will magnify Jesus do what thou wilt with thy people. Not one of us would flinch and try to make provision for the flesh if Jesus can be made great. For any other reason less than this we would not say as much; but for Jesu's glory, for magnifying of his name, if only thou wilt give us strength we will not dread martyrdom, though it be by fire. Anything for Jesus, everything for Jesus. Does not your heart say so, my brother? I know it does if you are loyal to your Saviour, and, therefore, to-day you will shoulder the new cross, you will grasp the fresh weapons of the changed warfare, you will take up the new tools in a fresh corner of the vineyard, though "you have not gone this way heretofore." If it be for Jesus' honour for us to advance, who desires to loiter? "Forward," then, is the message of to-day to all the soldiers of Christ. Great Joshua, lead thou the way! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Joshua iii. iv.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NO QUARTER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JUNE 30TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Elijah said unto them, take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape."—1 Kings xviii. 40.

ELIJAH may be called the iron prophet; he was a man stern and brave, who flinched not to deliver his Master's message at all hazards. It was meet that such a man should be raised up just at that time, for the Sidonian queen, Jezebel, was a woman of imperious spirit, superstitious to the last degree, and resolute in carrying out her will; ruling Ahab with sovereign sway, she had issued her mandate that the prophets of Jehovah should be slain, a mandate which was all too well obeyed. None could stand before this tigress until Elijah came, and dared her malice to do its worst. That lone man, of heroic soul, stemmed the fearful torrent of idolatry, and like a rock in mid-current, firmly stood his ground. He, alone and single-handed, was more than a match for all the priests of the palace and the groves, even as one lion scatters a flock of sheep. On the occasion of our text, you will remember that he had proved the prophets of Baal to be liars and pretenders, and then, like a practical man as he was, he went on to the natural conclusion. The law of Israel was, "The prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die;" and, therefore, the case being proved before all men, Elijah became himself the executioner; he bade the people seize the impostors, and he himself purpled the Kishon with their blood. "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape," was the thundering voice of the prophet of fire. The man did his Master's will thoroughly, never dreaming of compromise. Perhaps it was for this reason that he, with but one other of woman born, ascended to heaven by an unusual road. The God who made him so grandly faithful had determined that he who passed through the world differently from other men, should pass out of it differently, and he who had in life flamed like a seraph, should in a chariot of fire be carried to his reward.

I am not, however, about to go further into the details of that matter, but would seek instruction from its main idea. Brethren and sisters, the spiritual teaching of such an utterance as this is far-reaching; there is a lesson in it which might be turned to many accounts, for like the cherubic sword at the gate of Eden, it turns every way. One use of it must suffice for this morning: but at the same time, as a hint of how it might be employed, we would observe that it has a distinct bearing upon the present condition of the church of God. "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape," is a voice which our cathedrals and parish churches might be the better for hearing. Unholy compromises are the fashion of the day; an infusion of honest blood is needed, greatly needed. Men are growing utterly careless as to religious truth, because they see the servants of God and the votaries of Baal associated in the same church, and worshipping at the same altars. Sincere loyalty to God brooks not this confederacy with idolaters. Errors were suffered to remain in the national church for peace sake, and now they have become dominant, and threaten to destroy the lovers of the truth! It is now clear that every error of doctrine or ordinance is as mischievous as a prophet of Baal, and should not be endured. The world is wide, and men are only responsible to God for their beliefs; but the church should not, within her borders, suffer falsehood to propagate itself. Christians have no right to associate themselves with any church which errs in its teaching. If we see that gross error is rampant in a church, and we join it in membership, we are partakers of its sins, and we shall have to share in its punishment in the day of visitation. It is utterly false that it does not matter to what church we belong. It matters to every man who has a conscience and loves his God. I dare not associate in church fellowship with Ritualists and Rationalists; loyal subjects will not join the society of traitors. What a blessing it would have been in Luther's time if the reformation had been carried out completely! Great as the work was, it was, in some points, a very superficial thing, and left deadly errors untouched. The reformation in England was checked by policy almost as soon as it commenced. Ours is a semi-popish church. If in this country the axe had been laid to the root of the trees, as John Knox laid it in Scotland, we might have been spared a thousand evils; but now the trees, which were only lopped, begin to send out their branches again, and the errors which were allowed to occupy a secondary place by permission, now come to the front and threaten to thrust out the truth of God altogether. The only way in which our conscience can be kept clear before God, so that we can walk with him in light, is that we abhor every false way, and renounce everything which is not of God and of the truth. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." When will Christians see this? The Bible, and the Bible alone, is said to be the religion of Protestants, but the statement is a terrible lie; the most of Protestants believe a crowd of other things over and above what is taught in the Bible; they practise ordinances destitute of scriptural authority, and believe doctrines which are not revealed by the Holy Ghost. Happy will the churches be when they shall cast off the yoke

of all authority apart from the Scriptures and the Spirit. What have the Lord's free men to do with councils of the church, with fathers and doctors, with tradition and custom? The true church has but one Rabbi, and his word suffices her. Away with the commandments of men. Down with the traditions which make void the law of God. "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." A thorough purgation is needed; a root and branch reformation is imperatively necessary. May the Lord send us a prophet clothed with the spirit and power of Elias, by whom the fruitless and poisonous trees of error shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.

I am not, however, about to speak upon that important subject. I want to carry fire and sword into another district, where I trust the invasion will yield practical results. Let us look at home, searching our own hearts, testing our own souls. Our manhood is a triple kingdom; spirit, soul, and body, are the United Kingdom of the Isle of Man; that kingdom ought to be wholly dedicated to the one God of Israel; but instead thereof sin has polluted it, and even where by God's grace the reigning power of evil has been subdued, sin still intrudes and seeks to regain the mastery. The great law of Christian life in regard to sin within ourselves is, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." We hold neither truce nor parley with iniquity: war to the knife against every sin of every sort should be the constant habit of the Christian man's innermost nature.

I shall, this morning, only speak to the people of God. Let that be fully understood. I am not addressing myself now to unregenerate persons, to those who are not believers in Jesus Christ. I should be foolish indeed, if I were to exhort those who are dead in sin, to fight with their sins in the hope of obtaining salvation thereby; for that is not the way of salvation at all, even were they capable of it. Sinners must first be led to Christ, and find saving grace in him by a look of faith. Faith is the first business, not works. To talk of good works before the new birth is to disregard the divine order and put the last first. It is idle to talk of the duties of a Christian to a man who is not a Christian. To you unconverted hearers, the first, and for the present, the only work of God is, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." I address myself to those only who have believed; but upon them I would press home the clear, sharp, thorough counsel of the text.

We shall give, first of all, *reasons for the slaughter which we now command:* secondly, *arguments for its thoroughness,* "let not one escape;" and then, thirdly, *truths of practical value will be mentioned, to help us in carrying out the command.*

I. First, then, let us adduce some REASONS FOR THE SLAUGHTER which we now advise.

At the outset we remind you that our sins deserve to die, every one of them, because *they are traitors to our God.* Once we were traitors, too, and then we gave our sins a willing shelter. We conspired against the majesty of heaven, and, therefore, our transgressions were loved and pampered; they were our darlings, and we doted

on them. At this time, beloved, the case is altered, the Lord Jehovah is our God and king; we delight in his reign, and our prayer is, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Our inbred sins would fain rob the Lord of his glory. Every sin is virtually an attack upon the throne of the Most High, it is a treasonable assault upon the crown rights of heaven. He who rebels against the law of God by his breach of that law virtually says, "I will not have this law-maker to rule over me." It is not meet then, O ye children of the kingdom, that sin should be permitted to assail the Lord through you. It is not meet that souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus, loved with an everlasting love, and made secure of endless favour, should harbour those black and foul traitors the sins of the flesh and of the mind. Let the decree go forth in the power of God the Holy Spirit this day to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Take those foxes which spoil the vines, and let not one of them escape.

Let them be slain, secondly, because *they have already done us infinite evil.* In their assault upon God we have already found a master motive for their overthrow; let us remember also that they have sorely injured us and our race. My brethren, what has sin done for us? Can it point to any advantage or blessing with which it has enriched us? Look down the roll of history and see if sin be not man's worst enemy. Whose hot breath blasted Eden, withered all its bowers of bliss, and caused the earth to become barren, so that without labour even unto sweat she will not yield bread for our sustenance! Mark well yon innumerable graves which cover every plain with hillocks. Who slew all these? By what gate came death into the world? Was not sin the janitor to open the portal? Hearken at this moment to the shouts of war which in every age of the world's history have created a horrible din of groans of dying men, and shrieks of flying women. Who first dipped yon flag in blood, and made the air pestilent with carnage? And yonder despotic throne which has crushed down the multitude and made the lives of many bitter with hard bondage, who laid its dark foundations and cemented it with blood? Whence came war with its carnage, and tyranny with its sufferings? Whence, indeed, but from the sins and lusts of men? All over the world if there be hemlock in the furrow, and thistles on the ridge, sin's hand has sown them broadcast. Sin turned the apples of Sodom to ashes, and the grapes of Gomorrah to gall. The trail of this serpent, with its horrid slime, has obliterated the footsteps of joy. Before the march of sin I see the garden of the Lord, and behind it a desert and a charnel. Stay ye awhile. Nay, start not, but come with me. Look down into the ghastly gloom of Tophet, that region abhorred, where dwell the finally impenitent, who died with unforgiven sins upon their heads. Can you bear to hear their groans and moans of anguish? We will not attempt to describe the sufferings of spirits driven from their God, eternally banished from all hope and peace; but we will ask you, O son of man, who digged yon pit, and cast men into it? Who provides the fuel for that terrible flame, and whence getteth the worm that dieth not its tooth which never blunts? Sin has done it all. Sin, the mother of hell, the fire-fountain to which ye may trace each burning stream. O sin, it is not meet that any heir from heaven, redeemed from hell, should

make friends with thee. Shall we fondle the adder, or press the deadly cobra to our bosom? If it had not been for the grace of God our sins would have shut us up in hell already, and even now they seek to drag us there; therefore, let us take these enemies of our souls and slay them —let not one escape.

But further, dear brethren, it is meet that every sin should die through the grace of God, whether it be pride, or sloth, or covetousness, or worldliness, or lust, or any other form of evil; it is meet that it should die, because *it will work us serious mischief* if it be not put to death. Of great sins, as men think them, there is little need that I speak unto you, for you all know how dangerous they are; but those called little sins are equally to be renounced. To fall by little and little, is a terrible way of falling. A Christian man cannot indulge a known sin and yet walk with God. As soon as we tolerate sin within ourselves, we lose power in prayer. The Scriptures cease to be sweet to us when sin becomes pleasant; the services of the sanctuary are dull and lifeless when the heart is fascinated by evil. No tongue can ever tell what mischief a single sin will do to a professor—it is like the one worm at the root of Jonah's gourd. Take David's case—what a change came over the spirit of that man's life from the moment when he went astray! He reached heaven, but how painfully he limped all the way thither, and how heavily he groaned at every step. The songs he wrote before that time are frequently jubilant, and often ring with the crash of the loud sounding cymbals; but after that the voice of the sweet singer of Israel is hoarse; he touches the mournful string, and supplants the psaltery by the sackbut. Sin broke that eagle wing, and dimmed that eagle eye. Samson is a yet sadder case. Let his shorn locks and blind eyes speak to us. O soul, if thou wouldst behold thy worst enemies, look upon thy sins. If thou wouldst see that which can straiten thy soul's estate, bankrupt thy heart of joy, shipwreck thine assurance, and kill thy usefulness, thou hast only to look upon sin. See ye it not, its scales are bright with many colours, and its eye gleams with fascination, but its fangs are deadly. As Amalek was the remorseless foe of Israel, so is sin the pitiless enemy of the believer; therefore, to arms against it, take ye all its children and let not one escape.

These reasons might suffice to arouse us to the slaughter. Shall not traitors die? Shall not those who have compassed our ruin be put far from us? Shall not these insatiable adversaries, who are swifter than eagles and stronger than lions to injure us, shall not these, I say, be resisted and overcome? Peace with them is not to be dreamed of. The Lord and his people shall have war with Amalek, from generation to generation. Let not our heart incline to spare a single sin, but with a jealousy cruel as the grave let us hunt down these unclean beasts.

Methinks when Elias said, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape," he derived an argument from the spot whereon the altar had so lately stood. By that wondrous spectacle, when bullock, wood, stones, and water were all licked up by heavenly fire, he would plead with them to serve Jehovah. Surely Elias would say, "Look ye there, *the sacrifice has been accepted by Jehovah.* What then? What is the natural consequence of it but that the enemies of that sacrifice,

the setters up of a rival victim, should at once be slain?" Brethren and sisters, you and I have seen the sacrifice of Calvary, a sight far more august than that of Carmel. No bullock was there, but the Son of God made flesh. Your faith has seen him nailed to the tree, you have beheld the sufferings of his body, and by contemplation you have gazed upon the agony of his soul, and you know that it "pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." When he made his soul "a sacrifice for sin," the flames of divine justice fell upon the victim, and now the sacrifice is finished, Christ has made an accepted atonement for all our sin. Will you not draw the inference that henceforth you cannot serve sin? By the blood of Jesus you are under bonds to hate evil. These sins necessitated the griefs of Christ, will you indulge them? For these your transgressions your Saviour bore the wrath of God, will you return to them? This would be barbarous ingratitude, can you be guilty of it? Can you gaze upon the bleeding wounds of Jesus, and then wound him afresh with sin? Say, believer, art thou justified, and yet canst thou go back to wanton dalliance with transgression? It cannot be. There is no more sanctifying spectacle in the world than the sight of the bloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is nothing which to the Christian mind is a more convincing proof that sin must die than the fact that Jesus died. Heaven's eternal Darling bleeds and suffers for transgression, then transgression must die too. The cross crucifies sin. The tomb of Jesus is the sepulchre of our iniquities. By the blood and wounds of Jesus we are constrained to take the prophets of Baal and let not one escape. Have your swords ready for their hearts! Up and slay them. Hew them in pieces, as Samuel hewed Agag before the Lord.

The prophet might have used another argument, which would be sure to tell with them. "Hearken," he might have said, "*you have yourselves confessed that Jehovah is God.* Awestruck by the miracle, you have a second time repeated the ascription of praise to Jehovah and owned that he is God. What then? Let these seducers be put down at once." Such a confession demanded consistent action. The most of you to whom I speak this morning have avowed that the Lord of holiness is your God. You have not only said it by joining in the solemn worship of the sanctuary, and thus declaring it in psalms and hymns, and by saying Amen to our prayers, but many of you have avowed your personal faith before the church of God; you have come before the assembled brethren, and you have declared that the Lord is your God and king. Moreover, you have, in obedience to your Master's command, submitted yourselves to that symbolical ordinance by which you have declared yourselves to be dead to the world and buried with the Lord Jesus in baptism unto death. Solemnly have you been baptised into his name, and in his name have been raised up from the liquid grave—will you be false to all that this symbolises? Is your profession a lie? Was your baptism a blasphemous falsehood, a presumptuous intrusion. Let me put it to each heart as I would put it to my own; let us have no profession, or else make it true; and if our profession be true, it certainly demands that sin should not be pampered but abhorred. But am I not speaking to church members who think it consistent with their profession to do during the week what they would not like to have known

to-day? Are there not some of you who in trade have not clean hands and yet have been outwardly washed, as professers of Christ? It may be you will come this evening to the Lord's table, wherein you set forth the Redeemer's death, and yet the morsels from Satan's table are hardly out of your mouths. If your life all the week has been contrary to the life of Christ, what do you among his people on the Sabbath? If you indulge at home in a passionate spirit, in a proud and hectoring conversation, if you are dishonest, if your talk is unchaste, if you practise intoxication, or any other unhallowed indulgence of the flesh, who can clear you from guilt, and who shall be advocate? You have declared that you worship God, how dare you follow Baal? Ye say that ye are the servants of Christ, how can ye be servants of Belial? Can ye link the two together? It must not, cannot be. If God be God, serve him with all your heart and mind, but if the world and sin after all be better than the Lord's way, then say so honestly, and take your choice. Be true, I pray you, be always true to your solemn professions.

The prophet had a claim upon them because he was undoubtedly under *the inspiration of God.* He had no need to tell them so, for they all observed it. The actions of Elijah that day were very remarkable; and indeed, apart from the fact of his being guided by God's Spirit, they would have been questionable; but God gave him certain sacred instincts which stood him in the place of verbal directions, and the man was led beyond himself by a mysterious influence to which he was pliant and plastic. When he laughed at the priests of Baal, he did what God would have him do; when he bowed his knee and cried for the fire, and the fire came, he was yielding to the Divine impulse which struggled within him; and so when he said, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape," all the people were obedient, because they felt that God was speaking through the man. Now, if there be any voice in the world which is assuredly divine it is that which cries out of the excellent glory, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind." "Abstain from all appearance of evil." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This is the intention of election—he has chosen us that we should be holy. This is the object of redemption—he hath determined to redeem us from all iniquity. This is the great end and aim of the Spirit of God—that we may be his workmanship, created in the image of God. Holiness is the great requirement, and at the same time the great privilege of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. O brethren, think not that these lips speak alone when I say, slay the sins that are in you, let not one escape; it is God that speaketh it, and let his voice have power over your souls.

Again, I think Elijah had a very prevalent argument as he pointed to the fields around Carmel, and to the parched sides of the mountain. Far as the eye could see, there was not a speck of verdure. Even where the water-course at other times had supported a narrow line of straggling vegetation, there was now no trace of rush, or reed, or grass; all brooks and rivulets were dried up, and their banks were desolate. Men looked with eager gaze, but saw no trace of grass for beasts, or corn

for men. With what eloquence could Elijah have pleaded had he cared to do so! "All this has been brought upon you by your sins; you have turned aside from God, and he has smitten you till Lebanon languisheth and Sharon's plains are as the dust of the furnace. If you would remove the evil, sweep away the cause of it. Slay the traitors who have despoiled you." Let me at this time point some of you to *the barrenness of your spirits incident upon sin.* Remember your loss of fellowship with Christ, your want of joy in God, your powerlessness in prayer, your lack of influence for good upon the church and upon the world. What has made you thus barren? There was a time with you in those young days of your espousals, when your soul was like the garden of the Lord, and the excellency of Carmel and Sharon were yours; but now this day, even though you sit with God's people, you do not enjoy the word as they do, and though you pray it is not prevailing prayer, and when you sing, the hymns which charmed you once are now monotonous. The joy has departed from your life, its verdure and its comeliness are gone, and how? Have not your secret sins betrayed you? Were they not to your souls as a moth to a garment, fretting and devouring it? Grey hairs were here and there upon you, and you knew it not, till a spiritual decay made you totter for weakness. The thieves of sin have in the night broken through and stolen away your jewels and carried off your choice treasures. If you wish to recover your former state of bliss, you must at once with resolution take these prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape.

Might not Elijah have said "*Think of your unanswered prayers*"? Some of you have a long file of them. Like the Israelites in Elijah's day, who cried for rain, but no rain came, you have been praying to God for your children's conversion, and they are not converted; you have asked the spiritual life of a dear friend, and you have not had it; and peradventure the reason is this—you walk contrary to God, and he is walking contrary to you. If you will not hear him, neither will he hear you. He will not cast you off and let you utterly perish, but he will restrain the heavens, and they shall be as brass above you. You cannot be a Jacob in prayer if you are an Esau in life. If you are weak on your knees, your sins have wrought the mischief—let them not escape. Remember, if you will slay the Lord's enemies, he will remove your barrenness, and hear your cries. When the prophets of Baal had watered the ground with their heart's blood, the Lord deluged the fields with rain, but not till then. When we give up sin we shall find our captivity turned. Put away sin from thee and God will visit thee. Christian, purge thy way and thou shalt see Christ's face again. He hath gotten himself away into his chamber, to see what thou wilt do when he has left thee, and now if thou wilt sigh and cry to him, he will return. Above all, if thou wilt say,

> "The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Now will I tear it from its throne,
> And worship only thee,"

you shall soon have back your Master, and with him all the dews of his Spirit, and your soul shall blossom again, and the fruits of joy and

holiness shall be brought forth. Need I argue longer? Is not every Christian ready to take up the sacrificial knife, and slay his transgressions?

II. Secondly, let me remind you that the text is a very thoroughgoing one. "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." Let me give some ARGUMENTS FOR THIS THOROUGHNESS. I fear there is good need why I should argue for the thoroughness of the slaughter of sin, because human nature makes desperate attempts to rescue at least one sin. Like Saul, it cannot bear to kill all the Amalekites—it would save a few of the better sort. I have heard men very eloquent against drunkenness, very, and I would not have them less so; but they have not had a word to say against Sabbath-breaking, or against unbelief, hardness of heart, pride, or self-righteousness. They would kill the adder and spare the viper. Have you not also known some who justify the taunt in Hudibras, and "compound for sins they are inclined to by damning those they have no mind to." They are ferocious against certain sins and fond of others. They would not touch arsenic, but poison themselves with prussic acid. Just as Lot said of Zoar, so do they say, "Is it not a little one?" Some will avow that they have a constitutional tendency to a sin, and therefore they cannot overcome it; they take out a license to sin, and reckon themselves clear though they indulge their evil propensity. Brethren, this will never do. Indulgences for sin issued by the Pope are now rejected—shall we write them out for ourselves? Is Christ the messenger of sin? I know that some persons feel they are excused in the use of bitter language occasionally, because they are provoked, but I find no such excuses in the Word of God. In no one passage do I find a permit for any sin, or a furlough from any duty. Sin is sin in any case and in any man, and we are not to apologise for it, but to condemn it. It is pleaded by some that their father was passionate, and they are passionate, and therefore it runs in their blood, but let them remember that the Lord must cleanse their blood, or they will die in their sin. Others will say that their constant discontent, moroseness, and murmuring, and tendency to quarrel with everybody, must be set down to their infirmity of body. Well, I am not their judge; but the word of the Lord judges them, and declares that sin shall not have dominion over the believer. Does a sin easily beset us? we are doubly warned to lay it aside. More grace is needed, and more grace may be had. Never suppose that God has given to you a license for any sin, so that you may live in it as long as you please; no, but believe that Jesus has come to save us from our sins. I have received no intimation from the Lord to deal delicately with any man's sins, or to become an apologist for transgression. My message is that of Elijah, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." For, observe this, *one sin may result in fatal consequences.* "To a child of God?" say you. I say not that; but how know we that you are a child of God? how dare you think yourself born from above while your heart loves any one sin? In truth, you may be assured that you are not a child of God if there be any one sin from which you do not long to be delivered. A child of God may for awhile be the captive of sin, but never a lover of sin. One sin ruined our race; one fruit plucked from the forbidden tree hurled manhood from its pristine glory. The effect of that one sin has

gone on rankling in our blood through six thousand years, and will go on when years cease to be counted, destroying men throughout an eternity of woe, if it be not purged out of them. That is something dreadful to think of as the result of one sin. Where one sin does not ruin a church, see what mischief it causes. There was only one Achan, but Israel was defeated at Ai, and could not conquer until the accursed thing was discovered and put away. There are poisons so potent that one drop will envenom the whole body; one leak in a ship may be sufficient to send it to the bottom; one lone rock may break the staunchest timbers of a gallant vessel. Say not that there is no danger in one sin, but may God grant us grace to feel that no evil must be spared.

Then, dear brethren, there is this about it, *there never was one sin alone yet.* Sins always hunt in packs. See one of these wolves, and you may be certain that a countless company will follow at its heels. I spoke just now of the sin of Adam in the garden in taking forbidden fruit—let me ask, what was the essence of that sin? I think it would not be difficult to maintain the thesis that it was pride, or that it was discontent, or that it was lust, or unbelief, or indeed almost any other sin you like to name. It was a many-sided transgression, its light resolves itself into all the colours of evil. That devil's name was legion, "for they are many." Sin's whole brood may be hatched out of one egg; the first original sin had all others in its loins. So we must not think of indulging one sin, because it will bring seven others more wicked than itself. He who sports with one sin will soon come to play with more, and go from bad to worse. A thief who cannot get in at the front door because he finds it locked, tries the back door, and the windows, and then finds a little window so small that it was not fastened because no full-grown man could enter by it, and therefore he puts a child through it, and that is quite enough, for the little one can unlock the door, and let in as many thieves as he will. So one sin put into the soul and allowed to run riot there, may prepare the heart for transgressions never dreamed of. Not all at once do men grow abominable, but sin works the way for sin, and folly nursed grows into crime.

Dear brethren, there are Christians who, through a measure of yielding to some one sin, are all their life-time subject to bondage. They are weak in grace, they are melancholy, they never rejoice in the Lord; their characters are doubtful; they are poor examples, they have but little influence for good; their usefulness is questionable, their life is weak, and in all probability their death will be clouded. They will be saved, but so as by fire; they will get into harbour, but they will be like a vessel I saw some few days ago after the late gales, they will have to be tugged in, their masts gone, their sails rent to pieces, so that they cannot realise the blessed word, "So an entrance may be administered unto you abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

There is one strong reason for thoroughness in searching out sin, with which I will close this point: it is this, there is certainly no sin that Jesus loves, consequently there is no sin that we should love. Jesus never smiles on any sin of ours, but for every sin he wept, and groaned, and bled, and died. Shall his murderers be our favourites? Shall we

harbour those who spat in his dear face, and pierced his blessed side. Methinks there is no argument so powerful to the Christian as the love of Christ. If you are a wife, a loving, tender wife, you will do nothing which would grieve your husband. If you have grown cold in love, that motive will not sway you; but if your heart be warm, and you feel the love of your espousals, you will want no other law. Beloved, will you grieve the Lord that bought you? Will you do despite to him whose heart bled for you? By all the charms of his matchless beauty, and the flames of his quenchless love, I charge you be chaste to your soul's Bridegroom, and chase away the wanton rivals which would steal your hearts, and defile you. Let Calvary be the Tyburn of your sins.

"Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,
My heart has so decreed;
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made my Saviour bleed."

III. And now we shall close, in the third place, by mentioning CERTAIN DOCTRINES WHICH MAY HELP US IN THIS PRACTICAL WORK.

While I have been giving the exhortation to the people of God, I dare say many of you have been whispering, "Who is sufficient for all this?" That is just what I wanted you to say, and my first inference is this—hence we see how incapable is the natural man of self-salvation, and of sin-killing efforts. Tell him to slay his sins; not he—he will hide them as Rahabthe harlot hid the spies, and let them out again when a quiet time comes round. Kill his sins! not he—they are his Absaloms, and he would sooner die than lose them. The sinner kill sin? Ah, no. There is an old league between them, a sworn confederacy. The unregenerate will no more quarrel with sin than bees with honey, or dogs with bones. Sin is the sunshine in which the sinner, like an insect, dances through his little hour. "Ye must be born again, ye must be born again." All reformations which do not begin with regeneration are wood, hay, and stubble, and will come to an end. All that fallen nature weaves in her loom will be unravelled. "Ye must be born again, ye must be born again!"

And then, secondly, see how much this work is beyond all human strength. If I had to slay one sin, how could I do it? for to kill sin is not such easy work, it is hundred-headed and hundred-lived. You think, "I have overcome that evil," and meanwhile you may hear it laugh at you. How true is that of pride. A man says, "I will be humbler, I will pray down my pride," and at last he thinks, "Well, now, I have become humbler," a sure sign that he is prouder than ever. A humble man mourns over his pride daily; it is only a proud man who has any humility to boast of. But if one sin cannot readily be put to death, what shall we do with the thousands which haunt us and find such convenient hiding-places in our old Adam nature? How shall we slay all these? He that made us must make us again, or we shall never be worth a farthing. He who first of all gave a pure nature to Adam must impart to us the pure nature of the second Adam, or our existence will be a failure. O God, how weak are we!

But then the third reflection is, behold, the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost is God, and he has undertaken to make us pure

and perfect. Brethren, he will do it; blessed be his name, he will do it. We cannot help him in it, we cannot do it ourselves, it is absolutely certain we shall fail if we make the attempt; but he can perfect his own work. By his divine power and Godhead he will certainly take these prophets of Baal within us and slay them, till not one survives. Let us adore the Holy Spirit, let us love and bless him, make his person the object of our confidence, and the thought of him one of our richest delights. The Spirit of God will sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul and body, and you shall be presented faultless before the presence of God, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. What a comfortable truth is this to our souls!

The next word is this: dear brethren, let us be very watchful. Since all these sins must die, let us be constantly watching for an opportunity to put them to death. They are watching for our halting: let us watch for their slaying. Sleeping Christian, you might be justified in sleeping if the devil would sleep too, but he was never known to slumber yet. Sleeping Christian, you might have some excuse if sin would go to sleep, but sin never sleepeth; day and night it dogs our footsteps. Up, then, in the name of God, and be well aroused to watch and pray.

And lastly, and I delight to make this a closing note, what admiration and adoration ought we to give to our Redeemer, the blessed Son of God, because in him was no sin. Remember, brethren, that the manhood of Christ was really human. Do not think of your Lord as though he were not truly man. Remember, he was tempted in all points like as we are, but, oh, that word, "yet without sin." The devil sets him on the high mountain, and bribes him with a world, but he says, "Get thee behind me Satan." The devil puts him on the pinnacle of the temple, and bids him cast himself down, but he will not tempt the Lord his God. Satan appeals to his hunger and bids him turn stones to bread, but he will not take the way of the flesh; he rests on God, knowing that "man lives not by bread alone." O blessed Redeemer, pattern of our spirit, model to whom we are to be conformed, we reverence thee. Conquering in so many conflicts, coming forth from every trial victorious, thou art glorious indeed. It is not ours to open up the whole matter; it is ours to worship, ours to love, ours to imitate. O God, help us to do so, and the glory shall be unto thee for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—1 Kings xviii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TO THE THOUGHTLESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 7TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."—Isaiah i. 3.

IT is clear from this chapter that the Lord views the sin of mankind with intense regret. We are obliged to speak of him after the manner of men, and in doing so we are clearly authorised to say that he does not look upon human sin merely with the eye of a judge who condemns it, but with the eye of a friend who, while he censures the offender, deeply laments that there should be such faults to condemn. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," is not merely an exclamation of surprise, or an accusation of injured justice, but it contains a note of grief, as though the Most High represented himself to us as mourning like an ill-treated parent, and deploring that after having dealt so well with his offspring they had made him so base a return. God is grieved that man should sin. That thought should encourage everyone who is conscious of having offended God to come back to him. If thou lamentest thy transgression, the Lord laments it too. Here is a point of sympathy. He will not meet thee upon rigid terms and say to thee, "By thine own choice thou hast sinned, and now what remains to thee but to bear the penalty?" No, he will rejoice when thou dost return, even as he has sorrowed that thou didst depart from him. Let that thought of love be the key-note of our discourse this morning.

The point immediately in hand is the inconsiderateness of mankind towards God. Israel in this case is not so much a type of believers as a representative of sinners in general. The accusation will lie against all ungodly men, that they do not know, they will not consider. The greatest difficulty in the world is to make men think; I mean, think about spiritual things, think about their souls, think about their God. You can bring them to any other point but this. They will listen to holy words, but they will not lay them to heart; they will go through a round of ceremonial performances, but to worship in spirit the God

who is a Spirit is far from them. Thoughtfully and carefully to consider their way is what they will never do until the Spirit of the living God comes upon them and teaches them the true wisdom.

I shall this morning speak about this inconsiderateness of men, first, as *a serious fault*, and then as *attended in many cases with most solemn aggravations*. I shall next try, if I can, to find out *the secret causes* of this fault, and then we shall close with mingled *expostulation and invitation*.

I. We have to speak of A SERIOUS FAULT, common, yea, universal. "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

Men are most inconsiderate *towards God*. One would pardon them if they forgot many minor things, and neglected many inferior persons, but to be inconsiderate to their Creator, to their Preserver, to him in whose hand their everlasting destiny is placed, this is a strange folly as well as a great sin. Whoever a courtier may neglect he is sure to consider his king. Men when they start their sons in business will bid them mind the main chance, and attend to the principal point, and especially take care that they stand well with such a man, who has the power to help or to ruin them. Men, as a general rule, are far too ready to seek the assistance of those who are in power, and this makes it the more strange that the all-powerful God who lifteth up and casteth down should be altogether forgotten, or where remembered should still be dishonoured by mankind. If it were only because he is so great, and therefore we are so dependent upon him, one would have thought that a rational man would have acquainted himself with God and been at peace; but when we reflect that God is supremely good, kind, tender, and gracious, as well as great, the marvel of man's thoughtlessness is much increased. Every good man desires to be on good terms with the good; unusual goodness wins admiration, and an invitation to associate with the eminently excellent is generally accepted with pleasure; yet in the case of the thrice holy God whose name is love, it is not so. All attractions are in the character of God, and yet man shuns his Maker. If God were a demon man could hardly be more cold towards him. Wherefore is this? Why should I neglect one who is superlatively glorious, who has done me no evil, but has bestowed upon me boundless good? If I reflect upon the way in which he provides for me day by day, if I remember how he spares me, notwithstanding the provocations of my sin, and consider how he still entreats me to be at peace with him, I may well hear him ask me the question, "For which of these good things dost thou neglect me, and on account of which of these benefits dost thou forget me?" Strange freak of the madness of sin, that it should make a man forgetful of the everywhere-present God, and unmindful of the being whose bounties are constant and countless as the moments of the day. Oh, grief upon grief, Israel doth not consider her God!

Then, again, man is inconsiderate *towards himself* in reference to his best interests. Alas, that in a matter of the greatest possible importance, involving his all, man fails to use his thoughtful reason. Most men trifle with their past history; they do not sit down and look it in the face and mark with repenting eyes what sins they have committed. They are often wantonly thoughtless with regard to the present; they waste life as though it had no relation to eternity, as though time were only

meant for pastime, or for earthly task-work; neither its mercies nor its judgments, neither its obligations nor its sins, will they worthily think upon, but like men in a thick darkness they travel onward unobservant of the solemnities which surround them. The future, too, is equally unthought upon, the bright or the terrible future, the heaven eternal or the hell unending. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful, that immortal man should press on towards unspeakable misery with closed eyes, regardless of the wrath to come. He will not weigh his soul in the balances of truth, and learn thereby what its end will be. A thousand voices call to him and bid him pause and think awhile, but he lashes still the steeds of life, and like another Phaeton drives on, madly on, towards his own destruction. Man is inconsiderate towards himself. When we ask men to attend to matters which do not concern them, we are not astonished if they plead that they have little time, and no thought to spare. If I were this morning to address you, my dear hearers, upon a matter which affected the interests of the dwellers in the Dog Star, or had some relation to the inhabitants of the moon, I should not marvel if you were to say, "Go to those whom it may concern and talk to them; but, as for us, the matter is so remote that we take no interest in it." But how shall we account for it that man will not know about himself, and will not consider about his own soul? Any trifle will attract him, but he will not consider his own immortality, or meditate upon the joy or the misery which must be his portion. I state the fact in far too cold a manner, and you also hear it with mournful indifference; this must surely be because we have heard it so often, and the fact is so universal. Yet, it is in very truth a miracle of human depravity—what if I say insanity—that man should be unmindful of his best self.

Here we must add that thoughtless man is inconsiderate of *the claims of justice and of gratitude*, and this makes him appear base as well as foolish. I have known men who have said, "Let the heavens fall, but let justice be done," and they have scorned in their dealings with their fellow men to take any unrighteous advantage, even though it were as little as the turning of a hair. I believe there are such present. I have known some also who, if they were called ungrateful, would indignantly spurn the charge. They would count themselves to be utterly loathsome if they did not return good to those who have done them good. They feel that the obligations of gratitude cannot he disputed, nor do they wish to avoid them; and yet it may be these very same persons have been throughout life unjust towards God, and ungrateful towards him to whom they owe their being, and all that makes it endurable. Think of it. God created you, and ought he not to be the object of your worship? Besides creating you, he has preserved you in being; ought he not to have some service in return for this? You have been indulged, perhaps, with a smooth pathway, you are not to-day amongst the poorest of the poor, you have not been deprived of the use of your limbs, you have your reasoning faculties, you have not been smitten down with a stroke of paralysis, you are still able to mingle with men, and go about your business; and for all this ought not God to be thanked? His service is a delight to those who are in it; ought you not to render service to him? His law is the most just law that can be

conceived; it contains the essence of all honest law; yet you have not observed his commands nor loved him with all your heart and strength. Is this right? You discharge right willingly the obligations due to man; but will you rob God? You would think it shameful to be dishonest to your fellow creature, and yet will you be a robber to your God? Will you withhold the honour and glory which you ought to render to him?

You will observe that the text says, "*Israel* doth not know." Now, Israel is a name of nobility, it signifies a prince; and there are some here whose position in society, whose condition amongst their fellow men should oblige them to the service of God. That motto is true, "*noblesse oblige*,"—nobility has its obligations; and where the Lord elevates a man into a position of wealth and influence, he ought to feel that he is under peculiar bonds to serve the Lord. I speak also to those who are the sons of pious parents; I address myself to those who have been trained in the fear of God; you have been nourished and brought up with the children of God, you have often been looked upon as belonging to them, surely you ought not to have been unmindful of your gracious benefactor. To you more is given, and therefore of you more is required. Does it not disgrace you as a man of godly lineage to be no better than the sons of Belial in the matter of earnest consideration? You should, at this moment, feel a deep regret that up to this present you have been false to your pedigree, and traitorous to your God. Man is forgetful of what is due to his position and his ancestry.

One sad point about this inconsiderateness is, that man lives without consideration upon a matter *where nothing but consideration will avail*. Nothing can stand in lieu of thoughtfulness in religion. There are some who say, "Well, I cannot think about it, but I will pay a man to do it for me; I will find out a priest and give him so much money that he may see to my soul, just as my doctor attends to my body." This is an invention of a rebellious heart to quiet conscience, but it is both idle and wicked. Personal love of the heart the Lord demands, and he will be content with nothing less. "But I go up to the house of God regularly; I sit with God's people; I give of my substance." Just so, but God demands your heart, and if the heart be not given, if thou dost not love him with thy soul, and mind, and strength, thou hast done nothing whatsoever in religion. In vain your baptism, in vain your coming to the sacramental table; true religion is not a bodily exercise, nor a manual performance. The soul, the mind, the heart, with all its intents and faculties, must think of God, and yield submission to him; otherwise, though all the ceremonies ordained of God himself were rightly performed upon thee, yet would they yield thee not one particle of grace. Religion is a spiritual business, and if man lives and dies refusing to consider, he has put away from him altogether all hope of being saved, for grace comes not into us by mechanical process, but the Holy Spirit works upon the mind and soul.

This inconsideration, also, it should be remarked, occurs upon a subject where, by the testimony of tens of thousands, *consideration would be abundantly remunerative*, and would yield the happiest results. We should not marvel at men if they would not think upon topics which made them unhappy; it would not seem strange if subjects, known to

deprive men henceforth of joy and gladness, were avoided by wise men; but albeit that there are some who have suffered frightful depression of spirits in connection with true religion, yet its general and ultimate fruit has ever been peace and joy through believing in Christ Jesus, and even the exceptions could be easily accounted for. In some melancholy spirits their godliness is too shallow to make them happy; they breathe so little of the heavenly air that they are distressed for want of more. In others the sorrow occasioned by gracious reflection is but a preliminary and passing stage of grace; there must be a ploughing before there can be a harvest; there must be medicine for the disease before health returns, and the newly-awakened are just in the stage of ploughing and the condition of drinking bitter medicine. This will soon be over, and the results will be most admirable. A great cloud of witnesses, among whom we joyfully take our place, bear testimony to the fact that the ways of the Lord are ways of pleasantness. Our deepest joy lies now in knowing our God and considering him. God in Christ Jesus is to us an unfailing fountain of peace, joy, content and blessedness. O, that ye would hearken unto the Lord, for then would your peace be as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. Thus saith the Lord, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied them." Even here below godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and after death its weight of glory is unspeakable. O that you thoughtless ones knew the joy which you are losing, and were aroused from apathy.

II. Thus have I spoken upon the serious fault. Let us note next, AGGRAVATIONS WHICH ATTEND IT, in many cases. And first, remember that some of these careless persons *have had their attention earnestly directed* to the topics which still they neglect. Observe in this passage that these people had been summoned by God to consider. The heavens and the earth were called to bear witness that they had been nourished and brought up by the good Father, and in the fourth verse they are rebuked, they are earnestly chidden, because they continue to be so unmindful of their God. Now, if a person should for awhile forget an important thing, we should not be surprised, for the memory is not perfect; but when attention is called to it again and again, when consideration is requested kindly, tenderly, earnestly, and when because the warning is neglected, that attention is demanded with authority, and possibly with a degree of sharpness, one feels that a man who is still unmindful is altogether without excuse, and must be negligent of set purpose and with determined design. Some of you now present have thought of everything except your souls and your God, and though this morning I would, even with tears, beg you to give an hour before the sun goes down to serious reflection upon spiritual matters, the probabilities are that you will do no such thing. Here is the aggravation of your folly, that you have again, and again, and again been reminded of this weighty business, and all in vain. When you were running on in childish waywardness, parents plucked you by the sleeve, and said, "Consider your ways." They exhorted you

when you were rejoicing in your youth, to look forward to the day when for all this God would bring you into judgment. Since then, if you have been a sermon-hearer, you have often and often been called earnestly and urgently by men who spoke with all sincerity, to amend your ways, and turn unto the Most High. Yes, and God's voice has come to you in the very midst of your business. When you have had a quiet interval, and have been sitting down awhile, a voice, silent, but not unheard, has said to you, "Will you never think? Will you never open your eyes and look about you till you are in hell?" Your conscience, by fits and starts, has troubled you. The Bible in your house, which you have not read, has yet from the very fact of its being there upbraided you, and the mere presence of godly men has been a rebuke to you. When you have recollected how family prayer used to be offered in your father's house when you were a child, and how it is neglected in your own house, the neglect has rebuked you. Can you deny this? And can you doubt this also, that he who is often reproved and hardeneth his neck, deserves that he shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy?

The prophet then mentions the second aggravation, namely, that in addition to being called and admonished, these people *had been chastened*. They had been chastised, indeed, so often and so severely that the Lord wearied of it. He saw no use in smiting them any more. Their whole body was covered with bruises, they had been so sorely smitten. The nation as a nation had been so invaded and trodden down by its enemies that it was utterly desolate, and the Lord says, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more." Of course I cannot tell what has been the history of all of you, but I may be addressing some one this morning whose life of late has been a series of sorrows. You have plunged from one calamity into another. You have sailed over every known sea of affliction. You know what sickness means; there are in your body still the scars of old diseases. You have known what perils mean on the waters and perils on land. Perhaps you have been brought down from competence to poverty; you have been deserted too by those who should have comforted you; you know almost all the pangs which wring the human heart with anguish. Know you not that all these are sent to wean you from the world? Will you still cling to it? All these are calls from heaven, like the voice of hunger in the prodigal when he could not fill his belly with the husks, and therefore said, "I will arise and go unto my father?" Will you never say the same? How shall God afflict you now? Is your wife dead? Would you like to lose your child? Is one child gone? Shall death take away the other? Shall the last darling be taken from you? What stroke would touch your hard heart? Must the Lord strike again and again, and again and again, before you will hear him? If he be resolved to save you depend upon it he will not spare you; he will bring you somehow or other to himself if he means to bless you. Be ye not as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle; but yield now to the afflictions you have already suffered, or else you will certainly enhance your guiltiness by despising the chastening of the Lord.

It was an additional piece of guiltiness that these people were all the while that they would not consider, *very zealous in an outward religion.* They would not serve God in his own way, but they were very diligent in a way of their own. As you read the chapter you will notice how attentive they were to burnt offerings, and new moons, and feast days, and yet they would not consider. Certain individuals will become out-and-out Ritualists, and yet will not think upon the Lord. They will go he whole hog with Popery, and yet they will not turn unto the Most High and confess their sin, and seek mercy at his hand, and yield their souls to his truth. Strange, but yet it is so. There are persons here who seldom miss a service, and even come to prayer-meetings, and yet are not a bit the better for it; men of bad lives, and yet they love the preacher, ay, and would stand up for him if any spoke against him, and yet they are regardless of that preacher's warnings, and what is worse, they are careless concerning God and the world to come. They live, and I fear they will die, without Christ, and without hope. O sirs, how can I reason with you; your inconsistency is so glaring. You stand up to-day and sing the praises of God, yet to-morrow you will blaspheme him. What, will you shut your eyes when we are praying, and pretend to join with us, when you know that to-morrow you will act wantonly or do unjustly? How can you habitually sit with the people of God, ay, and in some measure, feel at home with them, and yet afterwards keep company with the children of darkness, and find yourselves at home at the bar of the alehouse, on the settle of the gin palace, in the theatre, or in other places where blasphemy is on all sides to be heard, and iniquity on all sides to be seen? Will a man mock God and insult him to his face? I beseech you, yea, I implore you, to think of this, for it greatly aggravates your thoughtlessness that you still continue in the midst of the people of God. To be in a man's house and not to think of him, to sing a man's praises and not respect him, to mix up with that man's children and yet not care about him, why, surely this would be most provoking. Shall such conduct be shown towards the Most High?

Yet, further, I want you to notice that there was an aggravation to Israel's forgetfulness of God, because she was most earnestly and affectionately *invited to turn to God by gracious promises.* Let me read you that word, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." A man might say, "Why should I think of God? He is my enemy. Why should I meditate upon my sinfulness, for it cannot be forgiven, and wherefore should I think of righteousness, when I know I can never attain to it?" O man, you know better. You know that God is love; you know that there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared; you know that a change of heart is possible, and the Spirit of God can make a new man of you. If the case were hopeless I should not wonder if you refused to enter into such dreadful contemplations; but, when the brightness of Jehovah's grace invites you, how can you turn your back upon him and still continue unmindful of him?

As a last aggravation, carefully note that these very people *had ability enough* to consider other things, for we find that they considered

how to get bribes, and were very sharp and shrewd in following after rewards; yet they did not know and did not consider their God. Oh, how quick are some men in the ways of evil, and yet, if you talk to them about religion they say it is mysterious, and beyond their power of apprehension. Those same persons will discuss with you the knottiest points of politics, or unravel the abstrusities of science, and yet they pretend they cannot understand the simplicities of revelation. "I am a poor man," saith one, "I am a poor man, and you cannot expect me to know much;" yet, if anybody were to meet that same "poor man" in the street and tell him he was a fool, he would be indignant at such an accusation, and would zealously prove that he was not inferior in common sense. "I cannot," says one, "vex my brain about such things as these;" yet that very man wears his brain far more in pursuit of wealth or pleasure. Oh, if men were idiots, then were they exempt from blame; if they were physically blind they would be excused from seeing, but when men have eyes they are to be blamed if they will not see. If a man has an understanding, and can exercise it well upon minor matters, how shall we apologise for his neglect of his God. I can invent no excuse for them, though I would gladly be their advocate. I can only beseech them to repent of this their wickedness, and no longer have it said of them that they will not know, that they will not consider.

III. We shall now investigate some of THE SECRET CAUSES of human indifference to topics so important. In the case of many thoughtless persons we must lay the blame to the sheer *frivolity of their nature*. Some individuals appear to have a brain-case which was never properly filled. Like butterflies, they flit from flower to flower, but gather no honey. Look at the life of many in the West End, who pass all their existence in dressing and undressing, distributing bits of card-board, riding in carriages, bowing and scraping, and eating and drinking. These notable do-nothings remind me of a set of butterflies flitting about a field of poppies. Nor are the poorer districts clear of such beings. Note the many fellows who go loafing from public-house to public-house, lolling and dawdling about from morning till night, as if they had nothing whatever to live for but to talk and booze. I hope that is not the case with any of you; if so, let me remind you that you may live in jest but you will have to die in earnest. You may waste this life in frivolity, but you will have to spend the next in eternal damnation. The moth may play, but the candle burns it, and then it suffers in earnest. You will come to be earnest enough when you wake up and find yourself condemned of God. Oh, if thou be a fool, or have been a fool up to this moment, may God sober thee and make thee wise to number thy days.

I have no doubt that in every case, however, the bottom reason is *opposition to God himself*. You do not think of God because you do not like him. Nothing will persuade you to consider, because you do not love the subject to be considered. If you are called to consider a topic which is pleasurable to you, you very readily turn to it, but in this case, for fifty or sixty years or more you have shunned this subject, though it has been forced upon you in all sorts of ways. You have either huffed it off in bad temper, or smiled it off in pleasantry; and when it

has come upon you in the cool of the evening, when you have been alone, you have called it "having the blues," and have gone off into company to get rid of it. The real reason is that you have no love to your God. Now this argues a base mind. It is disgraceful that you should not love one so infinitely good, noble, generous, and just. His character engrosses the admiration of all honourable spirits, and would commend itself to you if you were not bad at heart. Consider how depraved you must be not to love the Perfect One.

Upon some minds the tendency to *delay* operates fearfully. Probably if I went round this place I should not find a single person who intends always to remain indifferent towards God and the world to come. Nobody here intends to be lost. I do not suppose that anyone of you has chosen to make his bed in hell. You have all good intentions, and you mean one of these days to carry them out. Ah, and out of those who are now shut up in Tophet, there are very few, if any, who resolved to be there. The most of them meant one day to seek the Lord, but death came and found them still sleeping, as I fear he will find many of you. Do you know that you are in the presence of death now? He spreads his wing even now over your head; out of this vast company some of us must soon feel his dart. One of our city missionaries was witness to a dreadful scene, when in a poor house he found persons playing cards, using for a table a coffin covered with a white cloth; the coffin containing the father of the family. This was a mournful instance of hardness of heart, but in some aspects all triflers with religion are in much the same condition, for their souls are in jeopardy of eternal wrath, and yet they persevere in their merriment; they enjoy their frivolities while God's sword is furbished and bathed in heaven, and must ere long smite them to destruction. If they could see where they are, and what they are, they would no more be able to enjoy themselves than a man would sit down and feast beneath a gallows tree, or laugh with his neck bared and fixed beneath the knife of the guillotine. O that men were wise, and that they would consider this. Put not off reflection, for death is near, and it is this putting off, and putting off, which is Satan's most potent engine of destruction.

Some make an excuse for themselves for not considering eternity, because *they are such eminently practical men.* They are living for realities of the nature of hard cash, and they will not be induced to indulge in fancies and notions. For my part I feel great sympathy with them in their downright practicalness. I, too, am a matter-of-fact man, without speculation or fancy in me. "What I want is facts." I only wish that those who profess to be practical were more truly so, for a practical man always takes more care of his body than of his coat, certainly; then should he not take more care of his soul than of the body, which is but the garment of it? If he were truly practical he would do that. A practical man will be sure to consider matters in due proportion; he will not give all his mind to a cricket match and neglect his business. And yet how often your practical man still more greatly errs; he devotes all his time to money making, and not a minute to the salvation of his soul and its preparation for eternity? Is this practical? Why, sir, Bedlam itself is guilty of no worse madness than that! There is not in all yon wards a single maniac who commits

a more manifest act of insanity than a man who spends all his force upon this fleeting life, and lets the eternal future go by the board.

I have no doubt with a great many their reason for not thinking about soul matters, is *prejudice*. They are prejudiced because some Christian professor has not lived up to his profession, or they have heard something which is said to be the doctrine of the gospel, which they cannot approve of. Now, if this morning I stood here, and said, "Attend to me; give you souls up to my guidance; be led by me," I should admire you for saying, "We shall do no such thing." But I disclaim all idea of wishing to be a priest to any one of you. My teaching always is, "There is God's Bible, read it and judge for yourselves." You have brains, use your brains. My judgment was never meant to excuse you from using your own. If any man ask you to let him put a ring in your nose that he may lead you as a farmer does a bull, away with him! What can he be but an imposter? We say search for yourselves; come to God's book, to God's own revealed truth. Come to Jesus Christ, and find salvation in him. Surely you ought not to be prejudiced against a faith which speaks after this fashion.

In most cases men *do not like to trouble themselves*, and they have an uncomfortable suspicion that if they were to look too narrowly into their affairs they would find things far from healthy. They are like the bankrupt before the court the other day who did not keep books. Not he. He did not know how his affairs stood, and, moreover, he did not want to know; he did not like his books, for his books did not like him. He was going to the bad, and he therefore tried to forget it. They say of the silly ostrich that when she hides her head in the sand and does not see her pursuers she thinks she is safe; that is the policy of many men. They spread their sails and get up the steam and go with double speed straight ahead. What, not look at the chart? No, they do not want to know whether there are rocks or breakers ahead. Arrest that captain, put him in irons, and find a sane man to take charge of the vessel. O for grace to arrest that folly which is the captain of your barque and put sound sense in command, or else a spiritual shipwreck is certain.

IV. I am going to conclude with a few words of EXPOSTULATION. Few, I say; for if the few words I have spoken do not reach men's hearts by God's Spirit, I know that a great many cannot. My dear hearers, is not your inconsiderateness very unjustifiable? Can you excuse it in any way? Perhaps you think you will never die. Well, go to the cemetery and you will soon alter your mind. Our sires and grandsires died; how then should we expect to live? Do you hope to live to extreme old age? I have heard of one who often boasted that he expected to be quoted at par in the life market, but he fell thirty per cent. short of the hundred. Have you imbibed the idea that God will make a difference in dealing with you from what he does with other people? If so, get that out of your head too, for he has not one rule for one and another for another. If you die without Christ, you will die without hope, and if you have never repented of sin, God is no respecter of persons—there will be the same punishment for you as for other impenitents. Are you so mad as to hope that after all there will be no future? Then I can understand your thoughtlessness. If you

are like a certain poor maunderer, who calls himself a philosopher, and lately said, "the only immortality is that when the body is disintegrated; its ammonia, carbonic acid, and lime serve to enrich the soil, and to nourish plants which feed other generations of men." Here the ox and the ass of my text are outdone in stupidity. The man confesses that he is no better than a beast, and has no soul: as it would be useless to argue with a compound of ammonia and lime, he must not wonder if we hold no further debate with him. Now, my hearer, if you are such an ox or ass as that, your thoughtlessness is accounted for, but if you are not so far gone I am at a loss to make your conduct consistent. Do you think you will be able to brazen it out with God at last? You are as wax and he is the fire; you are stubble and he is the flame; how can you hope to fight it out with him? There are stranger things in this world than my philosophy has dreamed of, but I cannot invent an excuse for you, nor do I think you can yourself devise a justification.

Let me ask you again if you do not think that many a man's good opinion of himself would collapse if he were to consider; his opinion of himself would fall to zero if he would but think.

You spendthrift, who squanders his gold so freely, scattering with a fork what his miserly father gathered with a rake; could he go on as he did if he did not stupify himself into thoughtlessness? Do you think money-grubbers who toil and slave, and starve to amass wealth, would think it worth their while to do so if they really thought about it? For is the result worth the trouble? merely to have people say "he died worth a plum." Perhaps you have not chick nor child to leave it to, and the stranger who will inherit it every time he drinks his wine will jest about the old fellow who fretted and stewed to provide for a stranger's son. When men think they are so good that they will go to heaven by their works, would not that bladder burst if they pricked it with a little thought? It looks very fine. Look at it, "I have always been a stanch Dissenter, or an orthodox Churchman, and I have done my duty." Is not that boast like a beautiful bubble which a boy blows from his pipe with a little soap? What charming colours! It is beautiful as a rainbow! But if we touch it with a little meditation it is dissolved. The same may be said of nominal religion; if a man thinks God will take him to heaven because he calls himself a Christian, and has taken the sacrament, and paid his pew rent, and sat with God's people, he must surely have but a scanty brain; if he would exercise what little mind he has, he would see that his hopes do not hold water.

Do you want to be deceived? Do any of you really want to mislead yourselves? If so, shut your eyes and dream yourselves into destruction; but if in earnest, you would be right now, and right at last, then awake at once. How is it that ye will not know, and that ye will not consider? May the Holy Spirit save you from this desperate state.

Let us just consider for half a minute one or two things. If a man will resolvedly and prayerfully turn these things over in his mind, God may help him to come right.

If I consider awhile, I see that I have not lived as I ought to have lived, I have often done wrong. That is quite clear to me, and it is equally clear that the ruler of the world ought to punish sin. The

letting off of certain atrocious murderers of late, and the easy way in which certain criminals have escaped, makes us all demand a little more vigorous dispensation of justice, or else we shall have our land made a pandemonium. Even thus if God did not punish sin, he would not be a wise and efficient moral governor for the world. Then if God must punish sin he must punish *me*, and I must expect to suffer. But when I turn to this Book I find he has devised a way by which to save me. He has laid sin upon Christ that so I may escape. If I am puzzled to see how the sin of one could be laid upon another, I find in the word of truth that Christ Jesus is one with his people, and it is right enough that he should take their sin and suffer in their stead. I find that Christ actually did take the sins of all those who trust him, and really suffered in their stead. That seems to me to be a glorious truth. It meets the case of justice, and leaves a door for mercy. How can I avail myself of what Christ has done? I find in the Word that I am commanded to trust him. Trust him! That does not seem to be a harsh demand. He is true, he is great, he is God. I will trust him. God help me to trust him. I learn that whoever trusts him is saved. That is a glorious truth. I am saved and pardoned now, for I believe in Jesus. Will not some of you turn these things over in your minds? I pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you to do so. I believe it is often the way of salvation to men to be made to hearken diligently to the gospel, and to consider and meditate upon it, and with that view I have preached to you this morning, hoping that the Lord may incline you towards himself, and bring you to consider him, that you may now enter into his salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Isaiah i.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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BEHOLD THE LAMB.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 14TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold the Lamb of God!"—John i. 36.

IT is the preacher's principal business, I think I might say, his only business, to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" For this reason was John born and sent into the world, and such were the prophecies which went before concerning him. If he had been the most eloquent preacher of repentance, if he had been the most earnest declaimer against the sins of the times, he would, nevertheless, have missed his life-work, if he had forgotten to say, "Behold the Lamb of God." He did well when he baptized the repenting crowd, he spake nobly when he faced the Pharisees, and was a true hero when he rebuked Herod, but after all his chief errand was to herald the Messiah, to bear witness to the Son of God. What we have said of John we may say of every God-sent minister: he is sent to bear witness to the Christ of God, and whatever else he may do, if he do not this continually, habitually, earnestly, he is not fulfilling the errand for which his Master sent him, but has turned aside to baser ends. When any one of us who are called ministers shall die, and come before the Lord to give in our account, it will be a sorry thing for us if we can only say, "Lord, I have preached the dogmas of the church to which I belonged," unless we can also add that we have directed men to the living Saviour. Vain will it be to have argued with accurate logic, and persuaded with lofty rhetoric, unless we have uplifted Christ among the people. It will be idle to say, "I have preached against the scepticism of the times, I have rebuked the sins which raged around me, and have proclaimed what I knew of the glory of God in nature and in providence," for our chief and distinguishing work is to declare the name of the Lord Jesus and the power of his precious blood. As the stars called "the Pointers" always point to the Pole star, so must we always point to the Redeemer. Methinks the minister who has failed to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God," may expect at the last to be cut in pieces, and to have his portion with the tormentors.

I can scarce conceive a doom too terrible for the man who dazzled his hearers with oratorical fire works, when he ought to have lifted up the cross, and mocked immortal souls with the carved stone of his elocution when they were starving for the bread of heaven. Sermons without Christ condemn the preacher and delude the hearer. Sermons which do not point to Christ in them will be as hard to answer for as blasphemy or murder when the Judge is on his great white throne. It is cruel to amuse with trifles those whose souls are in jeopardy of eternal fire. Playing with men's souls is murderous work, and truly if the Lamb of God be not preached, the ministry is playing with souls, if not worse. John, however, most thoroughly discharged his life-work, for he was ever saying, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Notice in the text the attitude of the preacher, for it is very instructive. "Looking upon Jesus as he walked, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The preacher's eye should be *upon* his Master while he points *to* his Master. They preach Christ best who see him best. John had his own eyes fastened upon Jesus, and therefore did he by his own example as well as by his word say, "Behold the Lamb of God." If you will take your place in a crowded street, and stand for a few minutes looking at a certain object in the heavens, or gaze upward as if something were there to be seen, you will soon find that without asking others to do the same a company will gather round you and begin to look in the same direction. Indeed, a vast crowd might be collected, by no other action than by you yourself gazing intently into the air. So John, in addition to his saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," was doing the best thing to attract others to behold him—when he fixed his own eyes on Jesus, with fixed wondering, admiring, adoring gaze. John had no eye for any one but "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and therefore his words had point and power in them. And note that John's eye was upon Christ, not only when Christ was coming to him, but as he walked by him. Well may the preacher have his Master before him when his Master is cheering him with his fellowship and honouring him with his presence; but, on this occasion, Jesus was walking alone, as though in meditation, with his eyes probably bent upon the ground. It was not meet that he should always be coming to John; he had done that once, and so had put an honour upon his servant, but this time he came not to him lest men should think that he had any dependence upon John, but he walked in quiet musing as though his thoughts were otherwise occupied. Nevertheless, the Baptist had not forgotten his Lord, but again pointed him out. If the Lord deny to the preacher his comfortable presence, if no light of fellowship shine forth from the brow of the Crucified, it is still ours whenever and wherever we preach to let the eye of faith realise Christ as present, and still to cry to others with a heart that palpitates in union with our words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Even when I preach in chains I would labour to honour Jesus, looking to him as the end and object of every word I utter.

It is mine to preach a Saviour in whom I believe, whom having not seen I love. I am looking to him now for everything, even as I would have you do. I see in him superlative beauties which I wish you to see,

and I worship a divinity in him which I desire you to worship. I preach not to you an unknown God, or an untried Saviour.

There is something notable in our text as to the hearers. This was a brief but weighty sermon, worthy to be preached a thousand times. Nobody needs a new sermon when "Behold the Lamb of God" is the old one. John had delivered this same discourse before an assembled crowd; but now he had only two hearers, and those two were not unconverted persons; they were disciples of his own, and they were at least very near to the kingdom if not already in it. Yet to the solitary two and those already discipled he had only the same message to deliver, "Behold the Lamb of God." He was a man of rich mind and ready utterance, yet he kept to his one point in all companies. It is thought that if we go into the theatre to preach to the mob, we must be sure to preach Christ: let me ask you what subject would be fitter for an assembly of saints? I pray you tell me. It has been said that he who preaches in the street ought to confine himself to the simple gospel: my brethren, in what place would that subject be inappropriate or unprofitable? Paul knew nothing among the Corinthians save Jesus Christ and him crucified, the resolve is a safe one for all companies. In this respect some preachers know too much, and the sooner they join the holy know-nothings the better. Christ is appropriate as a subject for two disciples as well as for a thousand scoffers, for while he is the resurrection to those who are dead, he is also the life of those who have been already quickened. No subject is more sweet, more refreshing, more inspiriting, more sanctifying to the saint than the Cross of our dying Lord: the sinner needs it if he would be saved, but the saint requires it that he may persevere, advance, conquer, and attain perfection. Give me that harp and let my fingers never leave its strings, the harp whose strings resound the love of Christ alone. To harp upon the name of Jesus is the blessed monotony of a true ministry, a monotony more full of variety than all other subjects besides. When Jesus is the first, the midst, and the last, yea, all in all, then do we make full proof of our ministry. We do well when we are able to say, "of the things which we have spoken this is the sum, we have such an high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." May Christ be "all in all" in all our ministries, for so shall we prove that God hath called us to testify concerning his son Jesus.

This may serve as an introduction to our subject. Now let us take the text itself: John saith, "Behold Lamb of God."

And first let us behold Jesus, and *know him to be the Lamb of God.* It will be well to be fully assured upon that point, and heartily to accept the witness of God concerning his Son. When we have so done let us secondly behold Him, that is *contemplate Him*, and humbly and attentively view Him as the great propitiation, the true sacrifice for sin; then thirdly, beholding Him again, *let us gather instruction from* the Redeemer's appearance as the Lamb of God; and fourthly, let us behold Him, that is, *reverently adore Him* in his blessed capacity as the Lamb slain.

I. First then, let us behold our Lord, and LEARN THAT HE IS THE LAMB OF GOD.

What means the term, "the Lamb of God?" The Hebrews are accustomed to use the expression that a thing is "of God" when they mean that it is the greatest, the noblest, the chief of the kind. For instance, they call the cedars "trees of God," and the thunder is the "voice of God." So that we may understand in the first place by the expression "the Lamb of God" that Jesus is *the chief of all sacrifices*, the first of all offerings by which atonement is made to God for sin. And truly he is so. He stands above all others because he contains all others. All other sacrifices of God's ordaining were but pictures, representations, symbols, and shadows of himself. There is only one sacrifice for sin, there never was another and there never can be. All those offerings under the Aaronic priesthood which were presented because of sin were only representations of the One Sacrifice; they were that and nothing more. Jesus far excels them all. Beloved, if you want to see the lamb that Abel offered on the altar, the lamb because of which God accepted his faith, and had respect unto him, you must see Jesus Christ, for we are accepted in the Beloved. God hath respect unto any man who brings this sacrifice; but unto any who bring a bloodless sacrifice, such as the Cainites of Rome foolishly do when they offer the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, unto them God hath no respect, and never can have. The blood of Jesus once presented has for ever put away sin, and no further sin-offering can be brought. Whoever resteth in Jesus as the true and only sacrifice is accepted in his faith. If you desire to see the lamb which Noah offered when he came out of the ark, together with other sacrifices of which it is said that "The Lord smelled a sweet savour of rest," you must look to Jesus Christ; for the bullocks, and rams, and lambs of Noah all pointed to the one sweet savour offering of Christ Jesus offered upon the cross, where God and the souls of all believers meet in blessed union and find sweetest rest. This, beloved, is the Lamb of which Abraham spake when he said to Isaac, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." And to-day if you would understand the paschal supper first of all spread on that dread night when the destroying angel went through Egypt and smote the first born of all her land, if you would know who it is whose blood is the true passover when it is sprinkled upon the conscience, and whose flesh is meat indeed when it is fed upon by the children of God, you must look to Jesus, for he is the Lamb of God's passover. And if, pursuing your studies, your thoughts should turn into the tabernacle of old, or into Solomon's Temple, and you should see each morning a lamb slaughtered and its blood poured out, and each evening the same sacrifice repeated, if you desire to know what was intended by the morning and evening lambs you will find that they were but lambs of men, lambs presented by men, but they pointed to the Lamb of God, in whom their teaching is all summed up. He is the substance of that of which they were but the shadow. Jesus is the Lamb of the morning slain from before the foundation of the world, and the Lamb of the evening offered up in these last days for his people. Thus might we speak of all other sacrifices, and show that in Jesus they are all fulfilled. Atonement for sin is truly and in very deed to be found in the Son of God. In him alone is there remission, for in his blood alone is there efficacy to satisfy the law.

Stern as the truth is, we ought never to flinch from repeating it, that sin cannot be put away under the moral government of God without punishment. This is a rule from which there is no variation, and there should be none, for if justice be left unsatisfied the foundations of society are out of course. Infinite wisdom has found for us a door of escape by the way of vicarious sacrifice, but that way does not violate justice. Seeing that we originally fell by the sin of another, namely, our representative Adam, God has seen fit that we should rise through the righteousness and sufferings of another, namely, Jesus, the second Adam. Because Jesus was one with his people, and their federal head, it was just to allow him to suffer in their stead, and he has so done. Apart from this, every man must bear his own burden of sin and punishment. The only possible way by which a man can be forgiven his sin is by that sin being punished in his legal representative—the Lord Jesus. Jesus has borne what every believing sinner ought to have borne in his own person, or an equivalent for it, sufficient to recompense the injury done to eternal justice. No other person could be a substitute for our sin, for no other is our head and representative before God, and yet himself innocent. There is none other name given under heaven by which we may be saved. The Lord Jesus is of God appointed, and provided to be the one vicarious sufferer, the true bearer away of the sin of the world by enduring its penalty in is own person, so that whosoever believeth in him is redeemed from the punishment of sin. That is the gospel. I would sooner state it in the most simple language than have the power to deliver an impromptu poem, though it should excel the productions of Homer or Milton. There is more of precious truth and priceless learning in that faithful saying that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" than in the most profound discourse, or the most stately epic. Be thankful that you have heard it, that there is forgiveness with God because Jesus Christ has become the Saviour of men. O fellow sinner, you may approach your God without being plunged into suffering yourself, or needing to bring a victim with you, for Jesus Christ has been brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and his soul has been made an offering for sin. Tremble not, but receive the reconciliation effected by the Lamb of God. Come boldly, for the way is open, and man is invited to approach his God.

Moreover, our Saviour is called the Lamb of God, not only, *par excellence*, because he is, beyond all others such; but, secondly, because he is *the Lamb of God's appointing*. God from all eternity appointed the Lord Jesus. He was chosen and ordained to be the great Sacrifice for Sin. So was it decreed and written of him in the volume of the Book, that oldest of books, "I delight to do thy will O, God." In the fulness of time Jesus came to do the Father's will, and therefore it is plain that there was such a will to do, such a decree to fulfil. Jesus is elect, precious. Peter tells us that the Lord Jesus is "a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained from before the foundation of the world." Jesus is the choice of the Father. Our hearts rejoice that it is so, for when we rely upon Jesus Christ to save us we trust in one whom God has appointed to save his people. If as a poor guilty sinner I leave my sin upon Christ the Lamb of God, I leave it where God has bidden

me cast, namely, on the appointed scapegoat; I rest in a sacrifice which God himself ordained of old to be the sacrifice for sin. O soul, there can be no question that if thou comest to the Father in the way in which he himself appoints thou comest acceptably; for if thou wert not accepted thou mightest well say, "O God, thou hast set forth Christ as a Saviour, and yet thou dost not save men through him. Thou hast bidden him say, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' yet I have come and thou hast cast me out. This be far from thee, Lord." Such an event shall never happen. No human lips shall utter such a complaint. God's appointment is the guarantee of the acceptance of everyone that believeth in Jesus.

Thirdly. Christ is called the "Lamb of God" because *he is of God's providing*. The Father not only appointed his Son to be the sacrifice for sin, but he gave him freely to be such. Out of the bosom of God came Jesus Christ as love's richest benison. He is the Father's only begotten, God's dear Son, and to us "his unspeakable gift." "He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation of our sins." Men were bidden to provide the sacrifice under the law, but the one sacrifice of the Gospel is the gift of God. "This is the record that God hath given to us, eternal life, and that life is in his Son." It endears Jesus to us know that he is the dearest pledge of Jehovah's love to his chosen.

And then, fourthly. He is not only of God's appointing and God's giving, but he is of *God's offering*. Let us never forget that Jesus Christ was not presented to God by a human priest; there might then have been some mistake in the sacrifice. It was not left to the sons of Aaron to offer up this true sacrifice to God; that we may be quite sure that the offering was presented in fit order and in an acceptable way, it is written, "It pleased the Father to bruise him, he hath put him to grief. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." God himself had a hand in the sufferings of his Son. What means that cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But that God himself had turned away from him, and so had brought his soul into the extremity of woe. What saith the Scriptures? Is it not the Father's voice which saith "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow." Oh, beloved, when I think of this, that God chose his Son to be the atonement, that he gave his Son, and then himself did, as it were like another Abraham, offer up his own Isaac, I feel that the sacrifice must be acceptable and all sufficient, so that he who rests in it, need not have a shadow of a doubt but that his soul is saved.

One other reflection here; this sacrifice is also of *God's setting forth* to the sons of men. Remember the text, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." When we, as God's ambassadors, tell you of Jesus Christ, we do not so in our name but we do our Lord's bidding, and God himself by us is setting Christ forth, showing him, revealing him, exhibiting him, and bidding you come to him. "Behold," saith God "I have given him for a covenant to the people, a leader and commander to the people." This is God's will, that Christ should be

made known to the ends of the earth. Everywhere Jesus is to be preached, whether men will bow before him or no. We are quite sure we are doing God's will when we are setting forth Christ, for we are bidden to go into all the world and preach him to every creature. Assuredly, what the Lord thus sets forth he intends to give to those who seek it. There are no mockeries with God. He does not exhibit bread and refuse it to the hungry, or set raiment before the naked and refuse it to them. Happy are the men who see Jesus set forth manifestly crucified among them, for they have good ground to hope in him.

Now then, sinner, look at this. Thou wantest to be rid of thy sin; thou art conscious of it this morning, and thou dost confess it with shame. Well then, God's way of pardoning thee is that thy sin be laid on Jesus. As far as thou art concerned, thou canst obtain all the merit of the great atonement of Calvary by a simple act of faith. As of old the Jew laid his hand upon the victim, and then the victim was his substitute, so if thou dost but lay thy trembling hand upon Christ, he suffered for thee; he was an atonement for thee, and what a blessed atonement! Let us rehearse that point again, he is the chief of all sacrifices, the sacrifice of God's ordaining, of God's bestowing, of God's presenting, and now of God's setting forth to thee. What more wouldst thou have? In order that all things might be of God in this matter, from first to last Jesus is the Lamb of God; is not this well? Jesus is God's own chosen Saviour, what can be better? On what surer ground wouldst thou wish to rest? O that thou wert led to receive him now to be thine for ever. Jesus is my all, and I am a man as thou art; why should he not be thine also?

I feel as if I could tarry here just a minute and pass round among all this audience, this one solemn question for each one to answer—wilt thou accept Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, to be unto thy soul the Lamb of God which taketh away thy sin? Come, what sayest thou? It is ours to point to him and to bear our witness, wilt thou accept our testimony? Truly he is a great God and a Saviour. We have trusted in him and we are not confounded. Oh, if the Spirit of God sweetly leads thee now to say from thy heart—

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin—"

it is indeed well with thee both for time and eternity. Be of good cheer, thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee! Go thy way, thou art accepted in the beloved! Thine iniquities are blotted out like a cloud: not one of them shall be mentioned against thee any more for ever. O blessed Spirit of God out of thy great mercy grant that many and many a heart may lay hold upon the Lord Jesus to this at this hour.

II. But now we must pass on to a second point. "Behold the Lamb of God," that is, let us CONTEMPLATE JESUS UNDER THAT CHARACTER. Let us meditate upon him for a few minutes and then let us constantly fix our thoughts upon him.

Jesus Christ, as the atoning sacrifice, ought to be *the principal* object of every believer's thoughts. There are other subjects in the world

which we must think of, for we are yet in the body; but this one subject ought to engross our souls, and, as the birds fly to their nests so ought we, whenever our minds are let loose, to fly back to Jesus Christ. He should be the main topic of each day's consideration and of each night's reflection. We might, with truthfulness, transfer the words of the first psalm, and say, "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Christ of God and who meditates in him both day and night; for he shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

To meditate much upon the Lamb of God, is to occupy your minds with *the grandest* subject of thought in the universe. All others are flat compared with it? What are the sciences but human ignorance set forth in order? What are the classics but the choicest of Babel's jargon when compared with his teachings? What are the poets but dreamers, and philosophers but fools in his presence? Jesus alone is wisdom, beauty, eloquence and power. No theme for contemplation can at all equal this noblest of all topics,—God allied to human nature, God the Infinite, incarnate among sons of men, God in union with humanity taking human sin, out of love stupendous condescending to be numbered with the transgressors, and to suffer for sin that was not his own? O wonder and romance, if men desire ye, they may find you here! O love, if men seek thee, here alone, they may behold thee! O wisdom, if men dig for thee, here shall they discover thy purest ore! O happiness, if men pine for thee, thou dwellest with the Christ of God, and they enjoy thee who live in him. O Lord Jesus, thou art all we need!

> "Such as find thee find such sweetness
> Deep, mysterious, and unknown;
> Far above all worldly pleasures,
> If they were to meet in one."

Ye may search the heavens above and the earth beneath; ye may penetrate the secret mysteries to find out the callow principles and the beginnings of things, but ye shall find more in the man of Nazareth, the equal with God, than in all else besides. He is the sum and substance of all truth, the essence of all creation, the soul of life, the light of light, the heaven of heavens, and yet he is greater far than all this, or all else that I could utter. There is no subject in the world so vast, so sublime, so pure, so elevating, so divine; give me to behold the Lord Jesus, and my eye seeth every precious thing.

Brethren, no subject so well *balances the soul* as Jesus, the Lamb of God. Other themes disturb the mental equilibrium, and overload one faculty at the expense of others. I have noticed in theology that certain brethren meditate almost exclusively upon doctrine, and I think it is not severely critical to say that they have a tendency to become hard, rigid, and far too militant. It is to be feared that some doctrinalists miss the spirit of Christ in fighting for the words of Christ. God forbid I should speak against earnestly contending for the true faith, but still without fellowship with the living Saviour we may through controversy become ill-developed and onesided. I think I have noticed that brethren who give all their thoughts to experience are also

somewhat out of square. Some of them dwell upon the experience of human corruption until they acquire a melancholy temperament, and are at the same time apt to censure those why enjoy the liberty of the children of God. Other brethren turn all their attention to the brighter side of experience, and these are not always free from the spirit of carnal security which leads them to look down upon trembling and anxious hearts as though they could not possess true faith in God. I think also that I have noticed that those who pay all their homage at the shrine of practical theology have a tendency to become legal, and to exchange the privileges of believers for the bondage of servants. This also is a grievous fault. But when a man takes Christ Jesus crucified to be his mind's main thought he has all things in one; doctrine, experience, and practice combined. As Canaan contained Carmel, and Sharon, and Eschol, and Hermon, so Jesus comprehends all good things. If "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" be the object of our thoughts we have wine and milk, butter and honey, the fat of the kidneys, of wheat and oil out of the rock, all in one. "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me," "a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi."

All human beauties, all divine
In my beloved meet and shine.

Beloved, this indeed is *the most needful subject* of contemplation that can be brought before you. You may forget many other things without serious damage, and even upon important matters you may somewhat err and yet be safe; but you must live upon Christ, your souls must meditate on him, else you have left the bread from the feast and missed the water from the well. The crucified Saviour is as needful for our meditation as the air is for our breathing. The blood of Jesus is the life-blood of true religion; a bloodless faith is a lifeless faith. I stood yesterday by the little open grave of one of our orphans, and it said far more to me than I could say to those who mourned around it, for it reminded me that there is nothing worth living for beneath the sky, since all things are as a dream. Then I thought within myself as I looked on the poor orphan lads around me—yes, there is something to live for, to help the poor and train the young, and to make men holier and happier; but then I recollected that they too, like myself, were dying creatures, and therefore even the benefit received by them would also pass away. To live, then, for men is, as far as eternity is concerned, an unsatisfactory thing, unless there be some higher light in which to view it. But when the heart lives for Jesus it is not less philanthropic, for it loves men for his sake, but its object melts into the divine, for we love God when we love Jesus, since he is very God of very God. Beloved, this leads me to the very marrow of the matter; to believe in Jesus as divine is essential to real Christianity, and one of the distinguishing subjects of faith which separate Christians from other men. Individuals are to be found who possess great admiration for the prophet of Nazareth, but they know him not as the Son of God, or as the Lamb of God; they deny his divinity, and reject his atonement. With fair words and oily speeches they compliment his character, and bedaub his name with their worthless praises.

Yet they are not Christians, and the name is dishonoured when they wear it. Of late we have heard deniers of our Lord's divinity spoken of as Christian brethren; now, my common sense does not enable me to see how a man can be called a Christian who rejects Christ. Charity by all manner of means, but not falsehood. Union certainly, but not union in deadly error. Confederacy with those who do not believe Jesus Christ to be God, and deny his atoning sacrifice, is treason to the Lord of glory. Such persons may be excellent Mahometans, or Jews, or pure Theists, but they are not Christians; and if they wrongly assume that title we ought not to concede it to them. In this matter he that is not with our Lord is against him, and he that gathereth not with him scattereth abroad. Without a distinct and hearty recognition of our Lord's deity and atonement, how can a man be a partaker of Christ at all? True Christians about these truths have no question; Jesus is to them the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and the Son of God, whom the world shall yet adore.

III. Now, let us pass on to a third run of thought, but indulge in it very briefly. Let us behold the Lamb of God, that is, GATHER INSTRUCTION FROM JESUS UNDER THAT ASPECT.

I beg you to gather some *doctrinal* instruction. If the sacrifice provided by God for human sin must be none other than the Son of God himself, then sin is a gigantic evil, and then necessarily the punishment of sin is stupendous too. I observe with pain the attempt that is made to lower the meaning of Scripture upon the subject of the penalty due to sin. It has been usually believed to be everlasting, but this is now denied, denied in the teeth of express Scriptures. Now, the moment we begin to mitigate our thought of hell's terrors we also lower our idea of sin's evil, and with it we also decrease our estimate of the Saviour. All things in the temple of truth are to scale. If you take the inch scale which now seems to be getting popular you diminish the dimensions throughout! A little hell involves a little atonement. But, to be consistent, grant a divine Saviour, an infinite sacrifice, and you grant the infinite demerit of sin and then the eternity of future punishment is seen to be consistent. All these truths in Scripture lean the one upon the other, and your judgment upon every other will be affected by your opinion of any one. Do not err I pray you. Uplift the Christ of God and believe in the Lamb of God as none other than "very God of very God" and have him in high reverence whatever that reverence may involve. What though your inmost soul be awed with the deepest dread and made to tremble at the fate of those who reject the Saviour and perish in their sins, yet seek not to save your feelings at your Saviour's cost.

Moreover, what a conception of the love of God, the gift of the Lord Jesus for our salvation gives us. Despite the terrible wrath of God against sin he loved the sinner so much that he gave his only son to die for his redemption! Herein is love. Let us infer from that gift his willingness to answer prayer. "He that spared not his own Son but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Let us also see herein sure proof of the security of the saints, for if Christ be the Lamb of God and no less than divine, how shall they perish for whom such a sacrifice was offered? If it be

the blood of the Son of God which has bought us, we must be most effectually redeemed beyond all fear of perishing. So far you get doctrinal truth from beholding the Lamb of God.

Now, if you desire *experimental* aid look to the Lamb of God also. Is there a heart here troubled with sin? Do not meditate upon your sin hoping to find comfort from any consideration connected with it: as well look for heaven in hell. Do not look to your own resources for consolation,—as well search the Arctic ocean for tropical heat. "Behold the Lamb of God!" Sin vanishes when the Saviour appears. Are you tormented with the power of sin? Beloved, if you long to conquer sin within you, behold the Lamb of God! Crucified, your sin shall be upon that cross where Jesus died. Contemplations of the Saviour are the death of sin, but no other weapon will destroy them. If you suffer to-day from personal affliction and need fresh strength to bear it, "Behold the Lamb of God! His way was much rougher and darker than yours,—pluck up courage, he will bear you through. He is familiar with all your griefs, his pitying eye beholds your sorrows; and oh, if you are getting weary in the battle of life and tired of serving God, "Behold the Lamb of God!" wrestling unto blood, and your courage will return. Reaper in the summer's heat, see him as he grasps the sickle with that pierced hand! What strides he makes, how untiringly he labours till his bloody sweat falls on the ground. Up and do thy reaping too, working at his side. Builder in the house of God, if thou seest not the temple rising as thou couldst desire, lay not down thy trowel or thy mallet, but see the master-builder standing there with indefatigable perseverance following out his glorious design. Let not self-denial or self-sacrifice be hard when the Lamb of God is before thee. Let not perseverance be difficult, or shame, or scorn be hard to endure, or defeat, or death itself, be impossible to triumph in, when the Lamb of God is before them. He conquered upon Golgotha, perhaps thou wilt only conquer there. Only keep thine eye upon the Lamb of God and this will make thee strong to do and to endure.

I might thus continue urging children of God to their profit to look to the Lamb of God, but I shall only add this, that if at any time we grow discouraged about God's work, and are afraid that it will not succeed and so on, the very best encouragement for us is to Behold the Lamb of God. You get afraid that sin will conquer in your soul,—how can it, when Jesus died for you? Sin seemed to win the day when Christ was dead, but he rose again, and so shalt thou rise, and thou shalt be more than a conqueror. And in this world, is it not a very weary business to be a minister of Christ to-day? If I might have my choice I would sooner follow any avocation, so far as the comfort of it is concerned, than this of ministering to the sons of men, for we beat the air, this deaf generation will not hear us. What is this perverse generation the better for years and years and years of preaching? Here is this land going back to the foul doctrines which its fathers would not bear: while those who know better act in concert and continue in fellowship with the priests of Rome. The world is not worth the preaching to—we have piped unto it, and it has not danced; we have mourned unto it, but it has not lamented. It wants an Elias, a man of fire and thunder, to deal with such an age as this. But for all that,

there is no room for discouragement, for the truth will win the day ; it is in the hand of one who cannot fail or falter. He shall not fail or be discouraged till he hath set judgment in the earth, and the isles wait for his law. The fight may seem to hang in the scales to-day, but the conquest is sure to come unto him whose right it is. He shall gather all the sceptres of kings beneath his arm in one mighty sheaf, and take their diadems from off their brows, and be himself crowned with many crowns, for God hath said it, and heaven and earth shall pass away, but every promise of his must and shall be fulfilled. Push on, then, through hosts of enemies ye warriors of the Cross. Fight up the hill, ye soldiers of Christ, through the smoke and through the dust. Ye may not see your banner just now, neither do ye hear the trumpet that rings out the note of victory, but the mist shall clear away, and you shall gain the summit of the hill, and your foes shall fly before you, and the King himself shall come, and you shall be rewarded who have continued stedfast in his service.

IV. Now the last thought was to be this. Behold the Lamb of God WITH REVERENCE. I will not dwell upon it for I have not time. Lift up your eyes and worship him now. He exists, he is as truly there in heaven as he was here on earth. Behold him, worship him, trust him, love him, for be this remembered, he will come ere long, and that which we shall have to dread if we are unbelievers will be the wrath *of the Lamb*. Read through the book of Revelations and you shall find there, I think, more than twenty times, the Lord described as a Lamb. The song is the "song of Moses and of the Lamb." Worship is given "unto the Lamb, for he is worthy." He it is that takes the book and looses the seven seals thereof, and it is the Lamb that shall come "to judge the quick and the dead." "Wherefore kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little." Worship him at this hour for he cometh ere long. As the Lord liveth before whom I stand, he will summon every one of you to his bar. Take heed that he be not an object of terror to you as he will be if you continue in unbelief, but turn unto him that he may be your joy and gladness in the day of his appearing. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—John i. 19—51.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

RAHAB.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 21ST, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace."—Heb. xi. 31.

"Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?—James ii. 25.

THESE are two New Testament summaries of the life of Rahab, and they are equally honourable to her. Paul puts her amongst the great worthies who by faith wrought wonders. The eleventh chapter of the Hebrews is a triumphal arch to the soldiers of faith, and amongst the illustrious names inscribed thereon is the name of this harlot of Jericho. We are not, however, so much surprised at that, for she was evidently an instance of great faith; but we are somewhat surprised, I think, to find her name recorded by James, because he is an eminently practical writer, and was writing of good works rather than of faith. His object is to show that the faith which justifies the soul is a faith which produces good works, and hence he looks for instances of holy service of God. We should not have thought that he would have singled out Rahab, but he has done so, and this is the more remarkable because the only other person whom he mentions is Abraham; Abraham the Father of the Faithful, the Friend of God, a perfect and an upright man. James cites Abraham as standing for the one sex, and Rahab the harlot for the other. I have no doubt that James knew what he was about, and that the inspiration which guided him was infallible. Possibly Rahab was chosen to represent the Gentiles, in connection with the founder of Israel, who fitly stood for the Jews. While Abraham possessed a faith which manifested itself by works, so also did Rahab, the daughter of the Gentiles, descended from a race doomed to destruction, a Gentile of the Gentiles. And possibly another reason for mentioning her may be this, that like as Abraham renounced his own kindred at the call of God, and came forth from Er of the Chaldees, separated unto the Most High, so did this woman leave all her associations with Jericho, practically renouncing her nationality, forsaking her country, and leaving it to its

destiny and doom, while she took her part with Israel to be a partaker with the people of God in the promised inheritance. It is no small honour then to this remarkable woman that she has her name recorded not only with the heroes of faith, but also that she is selected by the great practical Apostle as one of two remarkable instances of the works which result from faith.

Let us consider her faith and her character, all the more attentively because of this high position which the Holy Spirit has accorded to her. With the commendation of Paul and the praise of James, backed as they both were by the witness of the Spirit of God, this woman's character is well worthy of attentive consideration. May the Spirit of God bless our meditation to our profit.

I. Our first observation upon her shall be that she possessed SINGULAR FAITH. This will be apparent if we reflect that she received *no instruction from her parents.* Birth-right membership was not a question which touched the case of Rahab. Her parents were of the condemned race of the Canaanites. They had no faith in God themselves, and could not inculcate it. She did not become a worshipper of Jehovah because the family always had been so. They had no family pew in the sanctuary, no prophet's chamber in the house, no name to keep up amongst the Lord's people. She was the first and only one of her race called out by grace. God had chosen her as "one of a family" by his electing love, and though we hope that grace continued in the household for many generations, yet it first of all came into it by her. Now, we do not so much wonder, though, I believe, in many respects it is equally to God's glory, when we see the children of godly parents becoming believers in Christ; for we remember the many prayers offered for them, the instructions which they have received, the affectionate admonitions which they have heard, and above all the godly examples which they have seen; we do not so much wonder, though indeed even in that case it is a work of the Spirit of God as much as in any other if the conversion be genuine: but we do marvel, and we cannot help it, when we see one rising out of a family in which no true religion had ever been seen before. Here we see a lone palm in the desert, a solitary life among the tombs. It is a struggle as some of you know to stand in the position of a lonely witness for God in a family. When in seeing enquirers I have to talk to young persons who are the only ones of the family attending the house of God at all, the only ones who make any pretensions to godliness, I feel great sympathy with them because I know they will have much to put up with, and a heavy cross to carry. Such converts are not plants in the conservatory, but flowers exposed to the winter's cold; yet it is right to add that I have often observed that these have become amongst the strongest, and most decided, Christians that I have ever met with. Even as Rahab, though her faith was solitary and was like a lily among thorns, yet was her faith none the less strong, but perhaps all the more unwavering.

Reflect again that her faith was singular because she was *not in a believing country.* Not only within doors had she none to sympathise with her, but in the whole city of Jericho, so far as we know, she was the only believer in Jehovah. It is right to conclude that if there had been other believers there, either the city would have been spared for

the sake of ten righteous, or else there would have been means found for their preservation; but she was the only one there. If we could have taken a birdseye view of the city of Jericho, and had been informed that there was one believer there, I warrant you we should not have looked to Rahab's house. She would have been about the last person that we should have supposed had been a possessor of faith in the true God. God has a people where we little dream of it, and he has chosen ones among a sort of people whom we dare not hope for. Who would think that grace could grow in the heart of one who was a harlot by name, as though her sin was openly known to all; yet it did grow there, like a fair flower blooming upon a dunghill, or a bright star glittering on the brow of night. There her faith grew and brought forth glory to God. I know not what god they worshipped at Jericho, but the whole city was full of idolatry, and she alone looked to the living God. The whole city was full of filthiness; and, bad as she had been, her faith must have made her loathe the sin. Jericho was neighbour to Sodom, not only as to locality but as to condition, and bad as this woman had been it is probable that her sin was among the least of the offences practised there. It is a shame even to speak of the loathsome crimes which defiled Jericho. When reclaimed by sovereign grace Rahab must have found herself as much alone in Jericho as Lot had found himself alone in Sodom. She was the one only believer amidst an idolatrous and depraved generation. May we not have hope, dear friends, that from the lowest slums of our vast city there may come other Rahabs? Why not a Rahab in the Haymarket as well as in Jericho? May we not trust that among those who have been in our prisons, there yet may arise believers in the Lord God of Israel? May we not even hope that the fame of the gospel may have been carried by rumour into cities unvisited by missionaries, and that here and there Rahabs in unknown cities may be seeking after the Lord. There is no saying what grace may be silently doing throughout the world in culling out the ones and twos whom God has chosen. Israel dreamed not of finding an ally within her enemy's walls, yet the Lord would have it so, and so it was.

Remember, too, that Rahab's faith was remarkable, because *her means of knowledge were very slender*; and, therefore, the food of her faith was comparatively scant. She had no book inspired of God to read; she had been instructed by no prophet; no Elias had spoken to her in the name of God; no Jonah had gone through the streets of her city, warning men to repent. What information she had obtained she had gathered by odds and ends. She had put together the talk of the market-place, the chat at the well, and the gossip outside the city gates, and she had gathered that a nation had come out of Egypt, and that for their sakes, and by their God, Jehovah, the Egyptian king had been destroyed at the Red Sea; that Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, had been overthrown in battle by this people; and that it was certain they were on their way to take the whole of Palestine to themselves, because their God had given it to them. Out of these common reports this woman had gathered evidence sufficient for faith to rest upon. The proverb hath it that common fame is a common liar, but in this case the general panic with which her

countrymen had been seized, convinced her that the reports were true. The terms in which the advance of Israel was everywhere described, convinced her that a terrible calamity hung like a cloud over the country, and paralysed both the court, the army, and the people; she saw that the ground of fear was that a living God was with this people, and she said within herself, "Verily, there is one God," and her conscience within responded to that declaration. She felt it was so; and light streamed in upon her spirit. She believed in Jehovah the God of Israel, and she began to worship him, expecting that the cause which he espoused would be successful; and that those who were his enemies would certainly come to destruction. Slender, I say, was the basis; strong enough in itself, but far inferior to that line upon line, precept upon precept, which we have so long received. Many here present have the whole of God's book before them, and yet do not believe; they have the testimony of his saints by thousands, and yet do not believe; they are earnestly entreated by living witnesses, yet do not believe; but this poor woman, with her few opportunities became a believer in Jehovah. Take heed lest in the day of judgment she should rise up against you. She believed with far less testimony, how will you be able to excuse your own persistent unbelief? I pray you, dear hearers, think of this.

Perhaps the most wonderful thing about her faith was that she should be a woman *of such a character*. She was apparently the most unlikely person to become a believer in Jehovah. She was a harlot, a woman that was a sinner, and universally known to be such. Desperate attempts have been made to find some other meaning for the word rendered harlot, but they have been utterly fruitless. Both Paul and James declare concerning her that she was what we commonly call her. The idea that she was a hostess or tavern keeper is absurd, because such a thing as an innkeeper was not known in those days, as everybody knows. To foist such an interpretation as that upon the original Hebrew is not to translate, but to misinterpret; and no one has ever attempted it with the Greek. She had doubtless been a great sinner; it is no use trying to mince the matter. Let the glory be to divine grace. Why should we wish to rob God of his honour in having delivered such a woman from her sin? But after she became a believer in Jehovah it strikes me she forsook her sin and became another character, though she was still known by her old title. We read that she hid the spies amongst the stalks of flax. For what purpose had she stalks of flax upon her roof if she had not begun to be an industrious working woman? A little thing will often indicate character; a straw shows which way the wind blows, and it seems to me to be most probable that she had forsaken her unhallowed life. And, then, since hospitality had come to be forgotten in Jericho and the other Canaanitish cities, she, being a follower of Jehovah, and knowing that hospitality was his delight, would go to the city gate every now and then, just as Lot had been accustomed to do, and watch for strangers, and see if she could entertain them. She was under no suspicion in doing this, because her old name would stick to her, and give her a licence to do what others might not attempt without being suspected of treason against the crown by entertaining aliens and adversaries. So I doubt not she most honestly entertained strangers, and

the reason why on this occasion the spies came to her, was because she was generally on the look out to receive wayfarers, who else perhaps would have received sad treatment at the hands of her wicked townsmen. So the generous spirit which true religion gave her brought her into contact with the Israelites who came to spy the land, and they became in God's hand the means of her safety when the city was destroyed. The grace of God had, even before these men came, lifted her up out of her former self; and though her old name stuck to her, I think I see reason to believe that her old character was gone, and she had become a new creature through the power of faith. However, she was a harlot once, and the wonder is that she became a believer. Wonders of grace are God's delight, he loves, for Jesu's sake, to call unto himself the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile. The Lord acts in the same manner still. Let us rest assured that Jesus still receives sinners, and that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before the self-righteous and captious. It is very remarkable that in the pedigree of Christ there should be so many women with blotted characters; that there should be an incestuous Tamar, a harlot Rahab, an idolatrous Ruth, and an adulterous Bathsheba, so that Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, has descended as to his earthly parentage from the loins of sinners, and so is nearly akin to them. O the depths of the grace of God! How matchless is the condescension of the Redeemer!

Once more, Rahab's faith was singular because *the subject of it was difficult.* What was it she had to believe? Was it not this? That Israel would destroy Jericho. Now, between Jericho and the tribes flowed the Jordan, and the Israelites had no means of crossing it. Only a miracle could divide that overflowing river. Did Rahab's faith expect a miracle? If so, it was remarkably strong. Around Jericho stood a gigantic wall. There was no likelihood of the assailants scaling it or making a breach in it. Did Rahab think that those walls would fall flat to the ground? Or did she leave the way of the capture with God, but firmly believe that it would be conquered? If so, she was a woman of no small faith. I have known intelligent Christians whose faith could neither have divided a flood nor leaped over a wall; but this poor woman's faith in God did both. She was sure that the God of the Red Sea would be the God of the Jordan, and that he who smote Og, king of Bashan, could smite the king of Jericho too. Her faith was special because it was strong, and stronger than faith often is in those who have far more of a basis on which to rest it.

Now, let each one of us say as we think of this woman's strange faith, "Why should not I have the same faith in the living God? God can give it to me. Though my past life may have been greatly defiled with sin, yet why should I not put my trust in the Lord, the Saviour? Is not faith the very grace which best becomes a sinner, and does most for a sinner? Has not God sent Jesus Christ into the world to redeem men from sin? Has he not redeemed many already by the power of his Spirit, and the application of his precious blood? I will believe in Jesus." Oh, may the Holy Spirit give you faith at this moment. May God's electing love single out some here who have been, if not actually, yet in heart, as bad as Rahab; and may they be led by infinite mercy, having followed her in sin, to imitate her in faith. Come, ye fallen,

Jesus can raise you. Come, ye filthy, Jesus can cleanse you. Believe, and eternal life is yours.

II. In the second place RAHAB'S FAITH WAS ACTIVE. It was not a sleeping faith, or a dead faith; it was an operative faith. It was active, first, *mentally*. When she believed she began to think. Some persons get converted at revivals and wild excitements, and seem to me as if they either have no brains or else their heads were never entered by grace. You have always to keep up a great excitement or you will miss them. They have no well-considered principles. If you asked them what they believe they would not know, nor would they be able to tell why they believe. They probably believe, because other people believe; the minister is earnest, and they had a good time in general, hence their faith; reasonable reason they have none. The best believers to wear and endure are the thoughtful ones, men of principle, men who weigh and judge. They of course have their conflicts all the more for their thoughtfulness, but then, on the other hand, they gather strength by the mental exercise; and these are the men who are not carried about with every wind of doctrine, but who stand fast in the trying hour. Would to God we had a large army of thoughtful believers for then Ritualism and Rationalism would do far less mischief. Rahab was a thoughtful woman, and had quite a system of theology of her own. She knew the past, she knew the story of the Red Sea, and of Og and Sihon; she knew something about God's having promised by covenant to give the country to the Israelites, and from that she gathered the present. Notice her doctrine upon present things, "The Lord Jehovah, he is God in heaven above and in earth beneath." She laid that down as a certain fact, that the Lord Jehovah who had done so much must be the God in heaven above and in the earth beneath; and then from that she drew her inference as to the future. She believed that God would give the country into Israel's hand, and she asked that when the Lord did actually do so, they would deal kindly and truly with her. So she had a doctrine about the present, the past, and the future, and she had it all arranged in her own mind. But her thought was not only so active that she became a doctrinalist, and one commentator even calls her a semi-prophetess, but she was active in her mind as to her decision for the Lord. She said, "I belong to this town, I have citizen privileges in Jericho; I will give them all up. God is against this city and it will be destroyed, and I shall be destroyed in it if I am against God; but he is the true God; I therefore side with him and take part with his people; if he will but have me, I will put myself beneath the shadow of his wings and ask him to cast the skirt of his garment over me. Henceforth I am no citizen of Jericho: I disavow my allegiance to its king." When the spies came she knew her course of action; she did not regard herself as bound to take any part in the defence of the city by sending word to the king that spies had come. She considered herself as an Israelite, and acted as such. Oh, I wish that some professors were half as decided as this. They know the truth but they do not stand up for it; they will hear it cavilled at and ill words thrown at it, yet their blood never boils with indignation against the adversaries of God. They keep very quiet, and perhaps one reason is that they have nothing to say. They have not learned Christ; they have no reason for the hope that is in them, and

therefore they cannot give it with meekness and fear; and so their religion appears to be a dead letter as far as their mind is concerned. God deliver us from such a faith as that. May we have a faith which thrills our entire manhood, moves our judgment, enlightens our understanding, and makes us decided for truth and righteousness in whatever company we may be thrown.

But next came another form of activity. Her faith was *active in her own sphere.* As I have already conjectured that she became willing to entertain strangers, so when she saw the servants of God in the form of the two spies she knew at once what to do. She took them home and she did her best to hide them. She did not set up to be a heroine, and say, "Now I am a follower of Jehovah, I must be doing something extraordinary." She did not pack up her clothes and start off to some distant place where she could find more glittering service for Jehovah; but she stopped where she was and served God there. She minded her own guests and kept her own house. I believe that home duties are one of the very best forms of the activity of faith, especially in Christian women. Our business is not to do what we fancy but what the Lord appoints for us. Of many a Christian woman it is best to have it said, as of Sarah, when they said, "Where is Sarah?" and the answer was, "In her tent." It is a good thing when a Christian feels he will not choose his work but will take the work God chooses for him; he resolves not to ape somebody else, but to follow the special path which the Lord marks out for him. Now Rahab was not to anticipate Joel, and drive a tentpin through the head of the King of Jericho, nor to be a Deborah and call some Barak to the battle. She had work at home ready to hand, and what her hand found to do she did with all her might. May we see in all of you who are Christians the faith which works in its own sphere; may you exhibit the religion of common things. Do not believe in knight-errantry. Do not be spiritual Don Quixotes. God has made you what you are, a mother, or a daughter, a husband, a servant, or a master; serve God as such. There is something for you to do in your position. Extraordinary calls may come, and I pray they may come to some here present, but they are not likely to be given to those who cannot use their present every-day opportunities. We may be called to very special service and have special grace given, but it is best for us till such calls are felt to mind our business in the station of life in which God has placed us. Moses kept sheep till he was bidden to deliver Israel; Gideon was threshing when the angel appeared to him; and the disciples were fishing when Jesus called them. They used diligence in their callings, and then threw their hearts into their higher calling. So Rahab did. The spies came to her, she received them in peace, she hid them, and after she hid them she let them down by a rope from her house on the wall, which perhaps she had done before to very different characters. Then she gave them the best advice she could, and was thus the means of preserving their lives. She fulfilled a very necessary part in Israelitish history. Her faith was truly active and is to be commended.

And let me say that she did all this to *the best of her ability,* and she used her common sense. She covered them up with flax; she put them on the house-top; she let them down after it was dark; she told them to go to the mountain; she recommended them to wait three days till

the heat of the search should be over; she acted prudently. She did all she could, and she did it with remarkable tact and shrewdness. I never could see why true religion should be so often associated with stupidity, and yet I have remarked that some gracious people either affect a babyish simplicity, or else the Lord has indeed chosen the foolish things of this world. If you have faith, surely you are not therefore to act as if you had lost your reason. It seems to me that faith is common sense spiritualised, carried into the affairs of religion, and that it is quite consistent, nay imperative upon us, to continue common sense in your ordinary affairs. We are to be wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves. Doth not the apostle say, "In understanding be ye men." Oh, if men had their wits as much about them when they serve God as they have when they are looking for guineas, how much more would be done in the church and the world, but there is often a blundering in the management of Christian societies and Christian churches which would not be tolerated for a moment in a house of business, and men are allowed to be head and foremost in Christian enterprises who would not be reckoned worth their salt for selling pins or driving pigs. We ought to be as thoughtful, as careful, as prudent, as quick, as enterprising, what if I say as go-a-head, in the service of God as we should be in the pursuits of life. I commend Rahab's faith for that, because while she was thoroughly active she was active in the way in which she could best serve the church of God, and brought all her wits and abilities into full play.

Rahab was also active *at great risk*. Rahab's faith made her run the risk of being put to death, for if the spies had been discovered there would have been short shrift for Rahab. The king of Jericho's sword would soon have taken off the head of the woman who dared to conceal the enemies of her country. She gladly staked all upon the truth of God, and ran all risks to save the servants of the Lord. In this being far superior to those who will not risk their employment, their situation, their good name, or even the love of a single relative for Jesus Christ's sake.

She was thus possessed of an active faith, and we may say as James does, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" Did not her works go with her faith? Was not the faith which justified her, a faith which produced works? Did not the Holy Ghost work in her a manifest activity which justified her faith by proving it to be real, and justified her by shewing that she was sincere?

III. RAHAB'S FAITH WAS MARKED WITH GROSS WEAKNESS. She lied unto the men who came to the door to seize the spies. She said that two strangers had come to her, but she did not know whence they came, which was a lie; and she did not know where they were gone, but they had departed some time ago, and they had better be pursued; this was another falsehood, and is altogether inexcusable. But at the same time, please to recollect that she did not know it was wrong to lie, There were, no doubt, in her conscience indistinct glimmerings of an idea that to lie was an evil thing, but, nevertheless, her surroundings prevented her clearly knowing it as we know it. To this very day among many Orientals it is far more usual to lie than to speak the truth; in fact,

a thorough-bred aboriginal eastern never does speak the truth unless by mistake, and he would be very sorry for it if he knew he had done so, even by accident. Among the Hindoos men cannot readily be believed upon their oaths in courts of justice. *We* despise a great liar, but the Easterns consider him a genius. Sad it is, but it has always been so, and this very much accounts for our finding such men as Abraham and Isaac deliberately saying, under certain trying circumstances, the thing that was not. You must judge individuals from their own standpoint, and consider their circumstances, or you may do them an injustice. I am not going to excuse Rahab's lie. A lie in Rahab, or in Abraham, is as bad as in anyone else; but in this case there is this to be said, she had not been taught, as most of us have been, that a lie is a degrading sin. Nobody had ever said to her, "To deceive is contrary to the law of God, for his Spirit teaches us not to lie one to another, seeing we have put off the old man with his deeds." There is one thing else to be said. I have often tried to put myself in Rahab's place, and have said, "Now, suppose I had been hiding two servants of God during the old days of Claverhouse's dragoons; for instance, if I had Alexander Peden and Cameron in the back room, and two dragoons should ride up to my door and demand, 'Are the ministers here?" I have tried to imagine what I should say, and I have never yet been able to make up my mind. I suppose I have more light than Rahab, and certainly I have had more leisure to consider the case, and yet I do not see my way. I do not wonder, therefore, that she blundered. And I am not much astonished that she said what she did say, for it would most readily suggest itself to her ignorant and anxious mind. I have turned over a great many schemes of what I would have said. I do not see how I could have said, "Yes, they are indoors." That would be to betray God's servants, and that I would not do. I have concocted a great many pretty-looking plans, but I confess that, upon examination, they appear to be more or less tinctured with the deceit which tries to justify or conceal deceit, and therefore I have had to abandon them, as being no better than falsehood and perhaps not quite so good. I am not sure whether Rahab's lie was not more honest and outspoken than many an evasion which has suggested itself to very clever people; in fact, as a rule, things which are not obvious, and need cleverness to suggest them, are rather suspicious. Strip a Russian and you find a Tartar, and if you strip these clever plans they peel into falsehoods after all. I do not want to say a word of apology for the falsehood, far from it. It is wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, altogether wrong; but, for all that, before you condemn Rahab, be quite sure that you do not condemn yourself, and ask yourself first what *you* would have said, or what *you* would have done under the circumstances. To tell the truth is always right. Consequences are not so much to be thought of as the claims of the God of truth. Sometimes, plain truth has had a very wonderful effect, and doubtless it would, in every case, be the best policy. I have heard of a man who had been brought up before Judge Jeffreys, to be tried for rebellion against King James II., and there was always very faint hope of a man escaping who had once been introduced to that monster. By some means, Story had gained a great repute for honesty, and Jeffrey brought him before the king to

speak for himself. As I remember the history, it ran somewhat in this way: The king said, "Well, Mr. Story, you were in Monmouth's army, were you not?" "Yes, please your majesty." "And you were a commissary there, were you not?" "Yes, please your majesty." "Did you not preach and make speeches to the crowd?" "Yes, your majesty." "Pray," said the king, "If you have not forgot what you said, let us have a taste of your fine florid speech: give us some flowers of your rhetoric, and a few of the main points on which you insisted," "I told them, your Majesty, that it was you that set fire to the City of London." "A rare rogue, upon my word," said the king, "and pray, what else did you tell them." "I said you poisoned your brother, and that you were determined to make us all papists and slaves." By this time the king had heard enough, and asked him what he would say if, after all this, he should grant him his life and a free pardon. Story thereupon declared that he should, in such an unlikely case, become a right loyal subject, whereupon he received a free pardon as an honest though mistaken man.

In his case plain speaking did what falsehood could not have done, and if, in all cases, it did not turn out so, yet our duty is clear, and, therefore, we must be prepared to do it and take the consequences. I suppose if Rahab had possessed great faith she would have said, "It is my business to serve God but not to break God's laws, and as it will be breaking God's laws to lie I will not do it. I will take care of his servants as far as possible, but it is *his* business to take care of them after all, and I must not do evil that good may come." Though that would have been the best course, Rahab was not yet so instructed as to have thought of it, and I fear that a great many here would not have thought of it either. Her fault was by no means one which we can afford to throw stones at; avoid it carefully, but do not censure it self-complacently.

IV. Rahab's was A FAITH THAT WAS NOT ABOVE THE USE OF OUTWARD SIGNS AND SEALS. Please note this. There are persons in the world who altogether despise the outward ordinances; they may be good, but they are not wise. Rahab first of all required from these spies an oath that they would preserve her, and next they gave her a token, a scarlet line, which was to be hung up in her window. This was the blood red flag of Israel. Was it not hoisted on the Passover night, so that the angel might pass by and deliver the people? She felt great comfort when she had placed the token in her window. She was not superstitious; she did not believe that anything mystical was in the red cord, but she put it there, because she had been told to do so. Now, the highest faith in Christ is perfectly consistent with the obedient use of Christian ordinances. We are resting on the precious blood of Christ, not upon sacraments. God forbid we should ever build our hope upon baptism or on the Lord's Supper. What are these things in themselves, but very vanity if we repose confidence in them? At the same time the Lord has given us baptism as the emblem of his death, his burial, and his resurrection; and if we believe that we have been buried with him and are risen with him, let us hang this scarlet cord in our window. He has given us the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to be the emblem of his death; let us eat the bread

and drink the wine in memory of him. We do not trust in the emblems in the slightest degree. We abhor the idea. Still we put the scarlet cord in our window, and thus let all men know that we believe in Jesus. We are not ashamed to show his death till he come. Yes, and we enter the house, that is the Church, and we delight to dwell there, numbered among God's people. We are not ashamed to be known to be members of the brotherhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not seek to get a faith that would abjure the assistance which God's Spirit appoints you. Everything that is of man's invention put aside, but that which is of God's ordaining is for your benefit, and you are bound to hold to it even though it be little as a scarlet line in the window.

V. HER FAITH WAS SAVING FAITH. I have shown how it was grievously marred, but it was effectual notwithstanding. She was saved when all the city wall went down. Her house was on the wall, but there it stood. Must it not have seemed strange? The walls began to rock and shake, and then down they fell with a thundering sound, and upward flew dense clouds of dust; but above all there stood the piece of the wall on which was Rahab's house, like an island in the midst of a tempestuous sea. The Israelites dashed over the ruins of the wall, pursued the doomed men with fury, and slew them, for they had been ordained of God to be their executioners. Not one escaped; but no sword came near to Rahab's bosom, no death took away one of her kindred. She was saved. She was taken out of her house with her friends, and put outside the camp of the Israelites, and afterwards received into it. She was married to Salmon, a prince of Judah, and afterwards had the high dignity of being one of the ancestors of our Lord. So, dear brethren, true faith in Christ, despite its weakness, will save us, separate us from the world, join us unto God's Israel, marry us to the true Prince of Judah, give us kinship with the Lord Jesus Christ; and what higher dignity is it possible to receive?

VI. With this I shall close when I have mentioned the last point, and that is HER FAITH BECAME WITH GOD ACCEPTABLE, SO THAT SHE WAS THE MEANS OF THE SALVATION OF OTHERS. Oh, I like this in Rahab, that she did not bargain for her own safety alone. Her sin had not hardened her heart as sin does in many cases. She thought of her father, and her mother, and her brothers, and her sisters. Now, wherever there is a real child of God there will be anxiety for his family. If you do not want to have your children saved, you are not saved yourself. I have seen professors who thought it quite enough if they went to heaven alone. I knew a man who would walk twenty miles on the Sunday to hear "*the truth*"—nobody preached it, but at one place; but when he was asked where his family went, he said that it was no business of his—God would save his own elect. Such people are not the children of God, because God's children are not worse than heathen men and publicans, for they care for their own households. Rahab was a good daughter; with all her wrong she loved her father and her mother. She was a good sister, and desired her brother and sisters to be saved. O you Christian people, do seek to be good in your relationships at home. I won't give a penny for you if you are not a good husband or a good wife. Away with your Christianity if it makes you a bad child. A domineering, surly father, a rebellious child, a

gossipping wife, an idle slatternly servant, a tyrannical master, these may belong to Satan, but God will not own them. Rahab, with all that was wrong about her, had an intense love for her kindred.

But notice that, love them as she might, she could not save them unless she got them under the red flag. If any of them stopped in the streets when the Israelites were slaying the people, they might say, "We belong to Rahab," but the reply would be, "We cannot help that, the oath we took was to spare all in the house where the red line was in in the window, and if you are not there you cannot be spared." It will be of no use when you die to say, "Spare me, O avenging angel, my mother prayed for me, my sister agonised for my conversion." No, you must personally get into Christ yourself, and have a real faith in him, or no prayers of others can be of any avail for you. But the mercy was that somehow Rahab was helped by God to bring all her family in. Her father did not say, "No, my girl, I do not believe in it." Some of you have fathers who do say that. Pray hard for them. And the mother did not say, "My child, you are mad. I have always thought you a little affected in the brain. Do not come teaching your mother." No, but mother came too. When the Israelites marched round the city the six days, and the people of Jericho laughed and said, what fools they were to think they were going to make the walls tumble down by walking round them, she still confided in God: but I dare say she had some difficulty in persuading her lively sisters and her argumentative brothers to believe too. They would say, "Rahab, are you quite clear about this? Is it not all a mere farce." Somehow, such was the influence God gave her, such was the power of her faith, that they all remained in the house, and with their families were saved. The house, I dare say, was filled as full as could be from top to bottom, and glad was Rahab to see it. God grant I may have all my family thus preserved. I am sure every child of God here is breathing the same prayer—"God of Rahab, give me my father and my mother, and my brothers and my sisters, and all my kindred." The Lord hear your prayers, and bless you for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Joshua ii. and Joshua vi. 22—25.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHY AM I THUS?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 14TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."—Romans vii. 22, 23.

LAST Thursday evening,* as many of you will remember, I addressed you upon the final perseverance of the saints. I have been greatly surprised and gratified during the week to learn how many persons found comfort and cheer from the simple explanation of that doctrine, which I then gave you. In fact, on the two past Thursday evenings we have been handling a *precept* and a *promise* both relating to the same matter, though each putting it in a different light. The one admonished us to *perseverance* by holding fast; the other assured us of *preservation*, because we are fast held. The welcome you gave to these familiar expositions has led me to think it would be acceptable, specially, to such of you as have been lately brought into the sacred household, and who may not even know the rudiments of religious experience, were I to-night to follow up those two elementary discourses with some little account of the great inward conflict to which the believer's life is exposed.

The passage before us tells a portion of the experience of the Apostle Paul. We all of us concede that he was a most eminent saint. Indeed, we place him in the front rank. For this reason his experience is the more valuable to us. If the greatest saints have their inward struggles, how much more should we expect to have them who have not attained the same degree of grace the apostle did. If he who was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles yet had to say, "When I would do good evil is present with me," then you and I, who can only take the position of babes in grace, or of ordinary disciples of Jesus Christ, must not be surprised if we have to bear assaults that surprise us and enter into struggles that distress us, and often are fain by stress of emotion to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

* Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,056. "Perseverance without Presumption."

I shall ask you, therefore, for your personal consolation to notice, first of all, that the ruling power in the Christian's mind is a strong affection, and, therefore, an intense pleasure in that which is pure and holy,—"I delight in the law of God after the inward man;" secondly, that there are passions and propensities within the breast of a man which come into direct conflict with this holy principle,—"I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind;" and, thirdly, that the discipline involved in this constant hostility, despite all the fretfulness and irritation it causes, is not without true and satisfactory evidence of our spiritual welfare. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

1. It may be said of every true Christian that the ruling power in him delights in the law of God. The new nature which God has created in every believer cannot sin because it is born of God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, and as such without guile, unblemished, incorruptible. We are made partakers of the divine nature. The divine nature, so far as it is communicable, is given to us when we are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are born not of the flesh, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God. We receive from God a new nature at the time of our regeneration. This new nature, though it is the younger, compels the older nature within us to submit to it. It has a struggle, but it gets the victory; that significant augury, "The elder shall serve the younger," is abundantly fulfilled in the little kingdom within our souls. It has a long struggling trial before the full subjugation; there are many harassing rebellions to encounter, but at length that which is born of the Spirit shall overcome that which is born of the flesh, and the divine nature within us shall vanquish the sensual nature. The Christian man because of this new nature implanted in him delights in the law of God. He has no desire to change that law in any way whatever. When we read the ten commandments, our conscience approves the ordinances of God while it reproves our own culpable shortcomings; yea, we feel that only God could have drawn up so complete, so perfect a code. We would not wish to have one single iota, word, or syllable of that law altered, though it condemns us. Though we know, apart from the precious blood of Christ, it would have cast us into hell, and most justly so, yet with holy instinct, pure taste, and righteous judgment we consent unto the law that it is good. It expresses God's mind on the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood, harmony and discord, and our mind agrees with God's mind. We perceive it not as truth established by investigation, but as truth all radiant, shining in its own majesty. We would willingly take our place on Mount Ebal or Mount Gerizim to give our tremulous Amen to the curses pronounced on disobedience, or to hail with solemn joy the blessings avouched to those who observe and do his commandments. Nor, beloved, would the Christian man wish to have the spirituality of the law in any degree compromised. He is not only pleased with the law as he reads it, though, as I have said, it condemns him, but he is pleased with the very spirit of the law. What if the law condemns in him an unchaste look as well as an unchaste action? He condemns that unchaste look in himself. What if the law

reaches to the heart and says, "Thou shouldst not even desire thy neighbour's goods, much less shouldst thou steal them?" He feels in his soul that it is sin, and that it is a bitter thing in him even to covet where he does not defraud. He never thinks that God is too exacting. He never for a moment says, "I knew that thou wast an austere man, gathering where thou hadst not strewed," but he consents to the law though it be high and broad, exceedingly broad. Though the thunderings, the lightnings, and the voices which usher in that law do terrify him, yet the wisdom, the equity, and the benevolence which ordained it resolves this awe into admiration. Being born from above, in fellowship with Christ, at peace with God, his very constitution is in unison with the law of the Lord. Is the law spiritual, so is he. The pact is unbroken, the concord perfect. I trust full many of you, my hearers, can endorse this; for, doubtless, as many of us as have been born again can bear witness that we delight in the law of God after the inward man.

Again, no Christian desires to have any dispensation to exempt him from complying with any one of the Lord's commands. His old nature may desire it, but the inner man saith, "No; I do not wish to get or to give any concession to the flesh, to have an allowance or make an excuse for sin in any point whatever. The flesh craves for liberty, and asks to have provision made for it. But, does any believer here want liberty to sin? My brother, if it were possible to conceive without blasphemy that the Lord should say to you, "My child, if there be one sin that you love, you may continue in it," would you desire any sin? Would you not rather say, "Oh, that I may be purged from every sin, for sin to me is misery, it is but another term for sorrow. Moral evil is its own curse; a plague, a pest, at the thought of which I shudder." It is thought a blessing in the Church of Rome, that a dispensation be given to men from certain religious duties. We ask no such favour; we value not their boon. Liberty to sin would mean putting double fetters upon us. A license even for a moment to relax our obedience to Christ would be but a license to leave the paths of light and the way of peace to wander awhile in darkness and danger; to exchange the glow of health for sore distemper and smarting pain. Brethren, I am sure you never did, and never will, if you be believers, ask the Lord for permission to transgress his statutes. You may have taken leave to do what you did not know was sinful at the time. There may have been a desire in your heart after something that was wrong. I grant you that. But the new-born nature, the moment it discovers its culpability, recoils at it and turns from it; it could do no otherwise. It cannot sin, for it is born of God. The new nature that is in you shudders at sin; it is not its element; it cannot endure it, whereas before you could riot in it and take pleasure in it, and drink iniquity like water. You ask no dispensation that you may escape from the law. You delight in it after the inward man.

The new-born nature of the Christian also laboriously desires to keep the holy law according to the mind of God. If it were proposed to any one of us that we should have whatever we would ask for, —if in a vision of the night the Lord should appear to us, and say to us as he did to Solomon, "Ask what I shall give you," I do not think

any of us would hesitate. I cannot imagine myself asking for riches or honour, or even for wisdom, unless it were wisdom of a far higher order than is commonly esteemed among the sons of men. But the gift which I feel I should crave beyond every other boon is holiness, pure and immaculate holiness. Possessing now an interest in Christ, knowing that my sins are forgiven me for his name's sake, the one thing I desire beyond everything else is to be perfectly free from sin, and to lead an unblemished life without sin of omission or sin of commission. Now, every Christian that has that desire within his soul will never be satisfied until that desire is fulfilled; and this shows that we delight in the law of God after the inward man. Nor is it long ere that desire will be fulfilled. Why, we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is; and until we do see him as he is and are like him, we shall always have restlessness of spirit, and always be crying out for more grace, and labouring against the evil that is in us, if by any means we may subdue it. O yes, beloved, in the fact that this is what we hope for, this is what we pray for, this is what we fight for, this is what we would be willing to die for, that we might be entirely conformed to the mind and will of God, there is evidence that we see that the law of God is good and delight in it after the inward man.

This, however, is proved in a more practical way to onlookers when the Christian shews that the life of God is enabling him to overcome many of the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Oftentimes in striving to be holy he has to put himself to much stern self-denial; but he does it cheerfully. For instance, should it happen in business that by using a very common trick in trade he might gain more profit, he will not do it if he is a Christian; he feels he cannot do this evil and sin against his God. Or should the young convert find that a little divergence from the right path would please the worldly people with whom he is obliged to associate, he may, perhaps, turn aside in his weakness, but the new life within him will never be easy if he does. The inner life, when it is in its vigour, will make him say, "Though I should lose the goodwill of these people, let me serve my Lord and Master. I must forfeit my situation if it come to that sooner than I can do wrong. I must be put even in peril of my daily bread sooner than I will be found wilfully breaking a commandment of Christ. I cannot do it." Now, I know many of God's children who have often suffered very severely, and have passed through a great many trials and troubles because they would not flinch from following their Lord. This is one of the proofs that they delight in the law of God after the inner man. When a man is willing to bear reproach, to be scoffed at, to be ridiculed, and taunted as mad for righteousness sake, when he is willing that men should sneer at him as a hypocrite and yclept him a Pharisee, when he braves the cold shoulder from those whose company he would otherwise have enjoyed, and all because he must and will follow the mind and direction of God's Spirit, I say then it is that the man gives proof that he delights in the law of God. I thank God there are in this Church those who have given that proof, and I pray that you and I, all of us who have received the divine nature, may give constant evidence by using the good art at all hazards, and taking up the cross at all risks, that our soul, even if it cannot be perfect in action, at any

rate, would be perfect in aim, and determined by God's help to cherish a love and desire in all things to do Jehovah's will. Is there any one here who is obliged to say, "Well, I do not consent to the law of God: I do not delight in it. When I hear it said, 'Thou shalt not covet,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;' I wish it were not evil to do those things that are forbidden. Pity 'tis our pleasure and our profit, our duty and our delight, should be so much at variance. I would rather there were less law and more license. Those commandments, especially, that touch our thoughts, and trench on the freedom of our will, are harsh and unpalatable. I am not content to be bound by them. I would rather live as I like." Well, my dear friend, I will say nothing more severe to you than this, you have no part or lot in this matter at all. If you had, if your heart had been renewed, you would talk after a very different matter. Whenever you hear persons commending a low standard of religion, a low standard of morality, whenever you find them vindicating lax views of right and wrong, you may rest assured that the spirit that is in them is not the spirit of the holy God, but it is the spirit of their sinful nature; yea, the spirit of Satan may have come in to make the human spirit even worse than it was before. But, does your heart delight in God's law? Is there a charm in that which is right to your soul? Is there a beauty in that which is virtuous to your Spirit's eye? Do you especially admire the character of Jesus because "in his life the law appears drawn out in living characters?" If so, then I trust, dear friends, you give evidence that you have been made partakers of the divine nature, that you are regenerate, and though there is evil in you still, yet there is the life of God in you which will resist the evil and subdue it, till you are brought safely to his right hand.

II. Now, secondly, we come to the conflict. Where there is this delight in the law of God, yet there is another law in the members. So Paul says, and he seems to me to speak of it in three different stages. He could see it first, and then he had to encounter it, and at length to some extent he was enthralled by it; for he says, "bringing me into captivity."

There is in each one of us a law of sin. It may always be seen even when it is not in active operation, if our eyes are lightened. Whenever I hear a man say he has no propensity to sin, I infer at once that he does not live at home. I should think he must live a long way from home, or else he has never been anywhere except in the front parlour of his house where he keeps his profession. He cannot have gone through all the chambers and searched them thoroughly, or he would somewhere have discovered that there is an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. This is true of the believer; he has to cry out against another nature, and say, "Help thou mine unbelief." It is always in the man. Sometimes it is dormant. I do not know whether the devil ever goes to sleep, but our sinful nature seems for a time to do so: not, indeed, that it is any the less sinful when asleep than when it is awake. It is just as bad as it can be. Gunpowder is not always exploding, but it is always explosive. Bring but the spark to it and anon it bursts out, as though it had been ready and waiting to exert its powers of explosion. The viper may be coiled up doing

no damage; but it hath a deadly virus beneath its fangs. It is still a a viper even when it is not putting forth its poisonous tooth. There is within our nature that which would send the best saint to hell if sovereign grace did not prevent. There is a little hell within the heart of every child of God, and only the great God of heaven can overmaster that mischievous indwelling sin. This sin will crop up when it is least expected, generally it breaks forth suddenly, taking us by surprise. I have known it to my sorrow. I am not going to stand here and make many confessions with regard to myself. Howbeit I did know a man once who, in attending a prayer-meeting felt his heart much lifted up in the ways of God, drew very near to his heavenly Father, held sweet communication with Christ, and enjoyed much of the fellowship of the Spirit. Little did he think that the moment the prayer-meeting was over somebody in the congregation would insult and bitterly affront him. Because he was taken unawares his anger was roused, and he spake unadvisedly with his tongue. He had better have held his peace. Now, I believe, that man if he had been met at any other time, for he was of a tolerably quiet temper, would have taken the insult without resenting it or making any reply whatever; but he had been unwarned, therefore he was unguarded. The very love shed abroad in his heart caused the animosity he encountered to shock his feelings the more. He had been so near heaven that he expected everybody present had thoughts in harmony with his own; he had not reckoned upon being assailed then. When there is most money in the house, then is the likeliest time for thieves to break in; and when there is most grace in the soul the devil will try, if he can, to assault it. Pirates were not accustomed to attack vessels when they went out to fetch gold from the Indies: they always waylaid them when they were coming home, with a view of getting rich spoil worth the capture. If you have enjoyed a sermon, if you have got near to God in prayer, if the Scriptures have been very precious to you, you may expect just then that the dragon that sleeps within will wake up and disturb the peaceful calm of your soul:

> "We should expect some danger nigh,
> When we receive too much delight."

Let us be the more watchful then in seasons of tranquility This evil nature, you see, will sometimes be excised, as if by jealousy, when we are being refreshed with good. It will certainly be developed when we are exposed to evil. The man who congratulates himself because he feels no sinful proclivities, no unholy thoughts, no impure imaginations, no conceited ideas, no turbulent passions had need be reminded of that saying of old Rutherford—"When the temptation sleepeth the madman is wise, the harlot is chaste; but when the vessel is pierced out cometh that which is within, be it wine or water." O my soul, thou hast only been at rest awhile, because there was not any exciting cause for a time. Put into the company of godly people and the mind occupied with good things continually, the bad instincts may sleep; but cast into other society, it only needs a slight provocation, and oh, how soon the evil that always was within manifests itself abundantly. There are weeds in almost every soil. If you throw up the soil from ten or

twenty feet deep there will be found the seeds from which they grow. Now, those seeds cannot germinate until they are put in a convenient place; then let the sun shine and the dews fall, and the weeds begin to show themselves. There may be many weeds in our nature, deep down, out of sight, but should they be thrown up by some change of circumstances, we shall find in ourselves evils we never dreamt of. Oh, let no man boast; let no man say, "I should never fall into that particular sin." How knowest thou, my brother? thou mayst never have been in that position in which such a sin would have allured you? Beware! perhaps where thou thinkest thou art iron, thou art clay; and when thou thinkest that the gates are closed with bars of brass it may be but rotten wood. With respect to none of us, even the holiest, is there reason to trust his best faculties, his best desires, his best resolutions; we are utter weakness through and through, and to transgressions prone, notwithstanding all that God's grace has done for us. The sin which is in us as a taint in our constitution, might easily break out as a loathsome distemper, spreading over the entire man from head to foot, and spoiling all the character. I pray God it never may.

It is remarkable how sin will show itself in the Christain, even in the holiest of his duties. Suppose it is prayer. When you feel that you ought to pray, and would draw near to God, do you not find sometimes an unwillingness as if the knees were stiff and the heart was hard. In prayer, when your soul is led away with thoughts of things divine, straight across your soul like some carrion crow flying across a landscape, there comes a bad thought and you cannot get rid of it, or perperhaps you get through your devotion with much delight in God; but you have not got out of your little room before an alien pleasure steals over your mind, a self-satisfaction that you have prayed so well that you are growing in grace; that you are rising to the fulness of the stature of a man in Christ. Is it so, that you come from the chamber of reverent worship musing on your own importance; meditating your fitness to occupy a place above the common rank and file of the soldiers of Christ—or that you might very well take a lieutenant's rank in the church of God. Perhaps, again, you did not feel any liberty in prayer, and then with a peevish fretful temper you will inwardly murmur, if you do not actually say, you might as well give up praying such prayers as those, there can be no use in them. So do what you may, or leave undone what you may, yet still the evil that is within will rise; it will intrude upon you at some time or other to let you know of its existence. You may bolt the door, and you may fancy that no thief can get in, and begin to take off your clothes and go to rest, while yet the thief is under the bed. So many a man has thought "I have barred the door against those temptations," and, lo, they have been hidden in his soul like the images which Rachel took that were concealed under the camel's furniture. Somewhere or other they were secreted where he had not discovered them. Take it for granted, dear friends, and do not doubt it. The Apostle Paul saw it, so you may if you choose to look. He said, "I see another law in my members."

And this law in his members, he goes on to tell us, was "warring against the law of his mind." It strove to get the mastery, and the

new nature, on the other hand resisted and would not let it get the mastery. The old lusts fight and then the new life fights too, for there must be two sides to a war. Such is the warfare going on within the renewed soul. We have known this warfare take different shapes. At times it has been on this wise. A wrong desire has come into a Christian, and he has loathed it, utterly loathed it, but that desire has followed him again and again. He has cried to God against it; he has wept over it; he has not consented to it; he fears lest he may have found it sweet or palatable to him for the moment, but when he has had time for reflection he shudders at the very thought of giving way to that temptation; and yet by the restiveness of his own flesh and by the reprisals of Satan that hateful desire will come up and up and up again. He will hear it baying behind him like a bloodhound following his prey, and sometimes it will take a leap and grip him by the throat and cast him down. It will be as much as that poor man can do to keep down that ferocious temptation that has arisen in his spirit. I can bear witness that such warfare is a very terrible ordeal, for it sometimes lasts for days, and weeks, and months together. I have known thoughtful Christians who have been harassed with doubts which have been suggested about the inspiration of Scripture, about the deity of our Lord, about the sureness of the covenant of grace, or some other fundamental doctrine of our most holy faith; or, even it may be the temptation has been to blasphemies, which the believer has abhorred from his very soul. Yet the more bitterly he has detested it the more relentlessly it has pursued him. Would he drive it away, it returned with redoubled force. "Is it true?" "Is it so?" Mayhap, that a hideous sentiment is wrapped up in a neat epigram, and then it will haunt the memory, and he will strive in vain to dislodge it. He would gladly hurl the thought and the words that clothe the thought into the bottomless pit. Out, cursed spectre, he will cry. Back, like the ghost of one's own crimes, it comes. Whence these evils? May they sometimes be traced to Satan? Ay, but most commonly temptation derives its strength, as well as its opportunity, from the moods or habits to which our own constitution is prone. In the discharge of public duties, when straining every nerve to serve the Lord, we may meet with men whose temper acts on our temper to stir up the bile and make us think evil of those to whom we are bent on doing good. In the peaceful shades of retirement which wise men seek out as a relief from the distractions of society, what strange fancies and monstrous vagaries will often come into the heart and confuse the brain. Or, sad to tell, in the walks of study where thoughtful men set out reverently to enquire into the counsels of God, how frequently have they been lured from the open paths to trespass on dangerous ground, to lose themselves in labyrinths, to leave the footsteps of the flock; and so to become giddy and high minded. Anywhere, everywhere, we are challenged to fight, and we must give battle to the sin that besets us.

But, the war carried on by this evil nature is not always by the continual besieging of the soul, at times it tries to take us by assault. This is a favourite mode of warfare with our own corrupt heart. When we are off our guard up it will come and attack us, and as I have said before, we are apt to be off our guard when we have been brought

up into the high mountain apart, when we have been near the Lord. In that exalted sphere of communion we have not thought of the devil, his existence has not come across our mind; but when we go down again into the plain, we soon find that he is still living, still distressing our brethren, still lying in wait to ensnare us. For this cause, our experience should quicken our sympathy. Full many a Christian has been surprised into a sin for which he was to be greatly blamed, but for which he ought not to have been condemned by his fellow Christians with so much severity. They ought to condemn the sin, but to remember themselves lest they also should be tempted. Many a man has been good because he had not a chance of being bad, and, I believe, many a professing Christian has stood because the road did not happen to be very smooth, and there was not much to be gained by falling down. We do not judge each other as God does. He knows the infirmities of his dear children. While he does not make excuses for their sin—he is too pure and holy for that—yet, having blotted out their sins through the atonement of Christ Jesus, he does not cast them off and turn them out of fellowship, as sometimes his people do their poor brethren, who may, after all, be as true children as they are themselves, and have as much real love to their Father. This evil nature when it is warring, laughs at our own resolutions, and mocks our own attempts to put it down. It must be warred against by grace. No arm but the Almighty arm can overcome our natural corruption. Like a leviathan it laugheth at the spear: it counteth it but as rotten wood. You cannot come at a besetting sin as you would. At times you fancy, "I'll wound it to its deadly hurt;" and in the very act of wounding one sin you are calling another into play. Many a man has tried to overcome his propensity to faintheartedness, and he has run into presumption. Some have tried to be less profuse in their expenditure, and they have become penurious. Some have said, "I will be no more proud, and then they have become mean-spirited. I have known some that were so stern for the truth, they became bigoted, who have afterwards become latitudinarian and hold the truth with so loose a hand that their constancy could hardly be relied on. Look straight on and "do the duty that next lies before you." It is no easy thing, believe me, to defend yourself from the surprises of sin. It is a thing impossible, unless God who created the new nature shall come to its rescue, shall feed it with the bread of heaven, shall give it water out of the Rock of Ages, and lead it on its way to the goodly land where the Canaanite shall never be, and where our soul shall feast on milk and honey.

I must not linger on this point, but pass on to notice the next. It is a sadder one. The apostle said this warring brought him into captivity to the law of sin. What does he mean by this? I do not think he means he wandered into open flagrant immoralities. No observer may have noticed any fault in the apostle's character. He could see it in himself, and he saw flaws in his life where we are not able to detect them, and probably that was a habit with the apostle. When I hear a good man lamenting his faults I know what the world will say: they will take him at his word and think that he is as they are, whereas with every godly man, if you knew him and marked

his life and conversation you would be compelled, if you judged him candidly, to say that he was like Job, perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil. Yet that very man would be the first to see spots in himself, because he has more light than others, because he has a higher idea of what holiness is than others, and chiefly because he lives nearer to God than others, and he knows that God is so infinitely holy that the heavens were not pure in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly; therefore, every one who sees himself in the glass of the law sees in himself a filthiness that he never saw before. As Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But I think the apostle was not referring here to acts of gross misdemeanor having brought him into captivity so far as he himself was concerned; though many who are God's children, get into sorry captivity because the law of sin and death in their members gets the mastery over them sometimes. Oh, watch against this: weep against this: I was about to say wrestle unto blood against this. Brethren, they that have committed great sins who have been God's children, though they have been saved, have been saved so as by fire; and if they could tell you how many times they were chastened, how sore the chastening was, how their very bones were broken, how the Lord made them see that he hated sin in his own family even more than anywhere else,—could you hear them confess how they lost the light of his countenance, lost enjoyments, lost the sweet savour of the promises, oh, it would make you say, "My God, be pleased not only to save me at the last but all the journey through. Hold up my footsteps in thy way that they slip not: make me to run in the way of thy commandments." It is a captivity like that of the Israelites in Babylon itself when a child of God is suffered to fall into some great sin. But, long before it comes to that pass, and I hope in your case it may never go so far, I think this law of sin brings us unto captivity in other respects. While you are fighting and contending against inbred sin doubts will invade your heart. "Am I a child of God? If it be so, why am I thus? I cannot pray as I would. Surely if I were a child of God I should not be hampered in devotion or go out to a place of worship and feel I have no enjoyment, while others feast and sing for joy of heart." Oh, what a captivity the soul is brought into when it allows inbred sin to cast any doubts upon its safety in Christ. We are saved because we are believers in Christ. Christ, having been all our confidence, is always in us the hope of glory. To as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name. If I have believed on his name, whatever my inward experience may be, or may not be in my own estimation, if I have believed on the name of Jesus I have the privilege to be a child of God. But sometimes doubts will come over us, and so we are brought into captivity. I have known those who were almost driven to despair. The child of God, has written bitter things against himself and signed his own death-warrant. Thank God, if we sign our own death-warrant it does not stand for anything. Nobody can sign that but the King, and he will never sign it for any soul that believes in him, however

feeble his love may be. We may be brought into captivity by a sense of sin, a temptation to sin, or a yielding to sin. If we ever come to that it will make us weak in serving, cold in prayer; restless when alone, and joyless in the society of the saints; nay, we shall feel almost lifeless. Oh, may God save us from it! Oh, may we wrestle hard; may we wrestle every day that we may keep sin down; may divine grace, even that grace which is treasured up in Christ Jesus, secure to us the victory.

III. It is some comfort when we feel a war within the soul, to remember that it is an interesting phase of Christian experience. Such as are dead in sin have never made proof of any of these things. Time was when we were self-righteous, lost, and ruined, and without the law, and sin was dead in us, so we thought. We were dead, in trespasses and sins, though we boasted of our own righteousness. These inward conflicts, show that we are alive. There is some life in the soul that hates sin, even though it cannot do as it would. I have known what it is to bless God for the times when my soul has felt inward war, and I would have been glad to feel the war renewed. Rest assured that the strong man of the soul while he keeps the house will keep it in peace. It is when a stronger than he comes to eject him, that there is a fight within your soul; I would suggest it therefore to you as a cause for consolation and thankfulness. Do not be depressed about it. Say—"after all, there is some life here." Where there is pain there is life. The best of God's saints have suffered in this very same manner. Your way to heaven is not a bad one. Some, I know, are not so troubled to any great extent, but the majority, of God's saints have to endure fightings without and fears within. You read of Martin Luther. That great bold man became a master of theology, by being taught in the school of temptation. Even his last hours were full of stern conflict. He was a man of war from his youth up. How constantly did he have to contend against himself. We get the same testimony from this chapter of the life of Paul. Be not, therefore, downcast as though some strange thing had happened unto you. Look up yonder to those saints above in their white robes singing their unending song! Ask them whence their victory came? They will tell you that it did not come to them because they were sinless or perfect in themselves, but through the blood of Jesus.

"Once they were wrestling here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears."

The richest consolation comes from the last verse of the chapter. Paul having asked how he should be delivered, answers the question, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "They shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," not only from the guilt of their sins, but from the power of their sins. What a mercy it is that the Lord Jesus has struck a deadly blow at our sin. He has broken the head of it. It is a monster, and has immense vitality; but it is a broken-backed, broken-legged, broken-headed monster. There it is: it lies hissing and spitting,

and writhing, capable of doing us much mischief, but he that has wounded it will smite it again and again, until at last it shall utterly die. Thank God it has not vitality enough to get across the river Jordan. No sinful desire shall ever swim on that stream. They are not molested there with tendencies and propensities to sin, and when they shall be restored to their bodies, and their bodies shall rise again, they shall have bodies not of flesh. Bodies of flesh shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, neither shall their bodies see corruption, but with bodies fit for celestial minds, they shall be eternally free from their former sin. Let us rejoice that Jesus Christ can do it all. He can save us from all sin. He who has bought us with his blood, he will not cheaply lose that which he has dearly bought. He will deliver us from all sin, and he will bring us into his eternal kingdom and glory without fail. So we fall back upon this sweet consolation. Though the fight may be long and arduous, the result is not doubtful. Remember the text of last Thursday night. That shall settle the point. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." You will have to get to heaven fighting for every inch of the way; but you will get there. Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, they all came safe to land in Paul's shipwreck, and so shall it be with the saints. When the sheep shall pass again under the hand of him that telleth them one by one, there shall not be one of them missing. They were all so weak that the wolf could have rent them in pieces; they were all so foolish that if left to themselves they would have wandered on the mountains and in the woods, and have been destroyed; but the eternal shepherd makes this a point of honour—"Of all them that thou hast given me, I have lost none. Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me." It ought to make you quite well now to know that you are sure of victory. Oh, by the lilies of the love of Christ, and by the strong right arm that once smote Rahab, and cut the dragons in twain, let every Christian be of good courage. The Omnipotent is with us; the Invincible is for us. Forward to the charge, onward to the conflict, though the fight wax warmer and sterner still, onward ever, onward without fear or a moment's hesitation. "He that hath loved us bears us through, and makes us more than conquerors too." "The breaker is come up before them; they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it, and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them." They have put to the route their foes. Thus shall it be spoken of all those that follow under the leadership of Christ; this is the heritage of the saints and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord. God grant us to be victors in this holy war, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Romans vii., viii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MOSES' DECISION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 28TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."—Hebrews xi. 24, 25, 26.

LAST Sabbath-day we spoke upon the faith of Rahab.* We had then to mention her former unsavoury character, and to show that, notwithstanding, her faith triumphed, and both saved her and produced good works. Now, it has occurred to me that some persons would say, "This faith is, no doubt, a very suitable thing for Rahab and persons of that class; a people destitute of sweetness and light may follow after the gospel, and it may be a very proper and useful thing for them, but the better sort of people will never take to it." I thought it possible that, with a sneer of contempt, some might reject all faith in God, as being unworthy of persons of a higher condition of life and another manner of education. We have, therefore, taken the case of Moses, which stands as a direct contrast to that of Rahab, and we trust it may help to remove the sneer; though, indeed, that may be of small consequence, for if a man is given to sneering it is hardly worth while to waste five minutes in reasoning with him. The scorner is usually a person so inconsiderable that his scoffing deserves to be unconsidered. He who is great at sneering is good for nothing else, and he may as well be left to fulfil his vocation.

It occurred to me also that, peradventure, some might, in all seriousness, say, "I have, through the providence of God, and the circumstances which surround me, been kept from outward sin; moreover, I am not a member of the lowest ranks, and do not belong to the class of persons of whom Rahab would be a suitable representative. In fact, I have, by the providence of God, been placed in a choice position, and can, without egotism, claim a superior character. It is possible that such persons

* Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,061. "Rahab."

may feel as if they were placed under a disadvantage by this very superiority. The thought has passed over their mind, "The gospel is for sinners; it evidently comes to the chief of sinners and blesses them. We are free to admit that we are sinners, but peradventure, because we have not sinned so openly, we may not be so conscious of the sin, and consequently our mind may not be so well prepared to receive the abounding grace of God which comes to the vilest of the vile." I have known some who have almost wished that they were literally like the prodigal son in his wanderings, that they might be more readily like him in his return. It is altogether a mistake under which they labour, but it is by no means an uncommon one. Peradventure, as we introduce to their notice one of the heroes of faith, who was a man of noble rank, high education, and pure character, they may be led to correct their thoughts. Moses belonged to the noblest order of men, but he was saved by faith alone, even by the same faith which saved Rahab. This faith moved him to the faithful service of God and to a self-denial unparalleled. My earnest prayer is that you who are moral, amiable, and educated, may see in the action of Moses an example for yourselves. No longer despise a life of faith in God. It is the one thing which you lack, the one thing above all others needful. Are ye young men of high position? Such was Moses. Are ye men of spotless character? Such also was he. Are ye now in a position where to follow out conscience will cost you dear? Moses endured as seeing him who is invisible, and though for a while a loser he is now an eternal gainer by the loss. May the Spirit of God incline you to follow in the path of faith, virtue, and honour, where you see such a man as Moses leading the way.

We shall first consider *the decided action of Moses;* and, secondly, *the source of his decision of character*—it was "by faith." Thirdly, we shall look into *those arguments by which his faith directed his action;* after which we shall briefly reflect upon those practical lessons which the subject suggests.

I. And first let us observe THE DECIDED ACTION OF MOSES. "When he had come to years he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." We need not narrate the stories which are told by Josephus and other ancient writers with regard to the early days of Moses, such as for instance, his taking the crown of Pharaoh and trampling upon it. These things may be true; it is equally possible that they are pure fiction. The Spirit of God has certainly taken no notice of them in Holy Scripture, and what he does not think worth recording we need not think worth considering. Nor shall I more than hint at answers to the question why it was that Moses remained no less than forty years in the court of Pharaoh, and doubtless during that time was called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter," and, if he did not enjoy the pleasures of sin, at any rate, had his share in the treasures of Egypt. It is just possible that he was not a converted man up to the age of forty. Probably during his early days he was to all intents and purposes an Egyptian, an eager student, a great proficient in Egyptian wisdom, and also, as Stephen tells us in the Acts, "a man mighty in words and in deeds." During those early days he was familiar with philosophers and warriors, and perhaps in his engrossing pursuits he forgot his nationality.

We see the hand of God in his being forty years in the court of Pharaoh; whatever of evil or indecision in him may have kept him there we see the good result which God brought out of it, for he became by his experience and observation the better able to rule a nation, and a fitter instrument in the hand of God for fashioning the Israelitish state into its appointed form. Perhaps during the forty years he had been trying to do what a great many are aiming at just now, he was trying whether he could not serve God and remain the son of Pharaoh's daughter too. Perhaps he was of the mind of our brethren in a certain church who protest against ritualism but still remain in that church which gives to ritualism the fullest liberty. Perhaps he thought he could share the treasures of Egypt and yet bear testimony with Israel. He would be known as a companion of the priests of Isis and Osiris, and yet at the same time would bear honest witness for Jehovah. If he did not attempt this impossibility others in all ages have done so. It may be he quieted himself by saying that he had such remarkable opportunities for usefulness that he did not like to throw them up by becoming identified with the Israelitish dissenters of the period. An open avowal of his private sentiments would shut him out from good society, and especially from the court, where it was very evident that his influence was great and beneficial. It is just possible that the very feeling which still keeps so many good people in a wrong place may have operated upon Moses till he was forty years of age; but then, having reached the prime of his manhood, and having come under the influence of faith, he broke away from the ensnaring temptation, as I trust many of our worthy brethren will ere long be able to do. Surely they will not always maintain a confederacy with the allies of Rome, but will be men enough to be free. If when Moses was a child he spoke as a child, and thought as a child, when he became a man he put away his childish ideas of compromise; if, when he was a young man, he thought he might conceal a part of the truth, and so might hold his position, when he came to ripe years enough to know what the truth fully was he scorned all compromise and came out boldly as the servant of the living God.

The Spirit of God directs our eye to the time when Moses came to years: that is to say, when his first forty years of life were over; then, without any hesitation he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and took his part with the despised people of God.

I beg you to consider first, *who he was that did this*. He was a man of education, for he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Somebody says he does not suppose the wisdom of the Egyptians was anything very great. No, and the wisdom of the English is not much greater. Future ages will laugh as much at the wisdom of the English as we now laugh at the wisdom of the Egyptians. The human wisdom of one age is the folly of the next. Philosophy, so called, what is it but the concealment of ignorance under hard names, and the arrangement of mere guesses into elaborate theories? In comparison with the eternal light of God's word all the knowledge of men is "not light but darkness visible." Men of education, as a rule, are not ready to acknowledge the living God. Philosophy in its self-conceit despises the infallible revelation of the Infinite, and will not come to the light lest it be reproved. In all ages, when a man has considered him-

self to be wise, he has almost invariably contemned the Infinite wisdom. Had he been truly wise, he would have humbly bowed before the Lord of all, but being only nominally so he said, "Who is the Lord?" Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen. Did not our Lord himself say it, and his word is for all time, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes?" But yet, sometimes a man of education like Moses, is led by the blessing of heaven to take the side of truth, and of the right, and when it is so, let the Lord be magnified!

Beside being a man of education, he was a person of high rank. He had been adopted by Thermuthis, the daughter of Pharaoh, and it is possible, though we cannot be sure of it, that he was the next heir by adoption to the Egyptian crown. It is said that the King of Egypt had no other child, and that his daughter had no son, and that Moses would, therefore, have become the King of Egypt. Yet, great as he was, and mighty at court, he joined with the oppressed people of God. May God grant that we may see many eminent men bravely standing up for God and for his truth, and repudiating the religion of men; but if they do, it will be a miracle of mercy indeed, for few of the great ones have ever done so. Here and there in heaven may be found a king, and here and there in the church may be found one who wears a coronet and prays; but how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven. When they do so God be thanked for it.

In addition to this, remember that Moses was a man of great ability. We have evidence of that in the administrative skill with which he managed the affairs of Israel in the wilderness; for though he was inspired of God, yet his own natural ability was not superseded but directed. He was a poet: "Then sung Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." That memorable poem at the Red Sea is a very masterly ode, and proves the incomparable ability of the writer. The ninetieth Psalm also shows the range of his poetic powers. He was both prophet, priest, and king in the midst of Israel, and a man second to no man save that Man who was more than man. No other man I know of comes so near in the glory of his character to Christ as Moses does, so that we find the two names linked together in the praise of heaven,—"They sung the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb." Thus you see he was a truly eminent man, yet he cast in his lot with God's people. It is not many that will do this, for the Lord has usually chosen the weak things to confound the mighty, and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Yet here he, who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, took this great man, this wise man, and gave him grace to be decided in the service of his God. Should I address such an one this morning I would anxiously pray that a voice from the excellent glory may call him forth to the same clear line of action.

Next, consider *what sort of society Moses felt compelled to leave.* In coming forth from Pharaoh's court he must separate from all the courtiers and men of high degree, some of whom may have been very estimable people. There is always a charm about the society of the great, but every bond was severed by the resolute spirit of Moses. I

do not doubt that being learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, such a man as Moses would be always welcome in the various circles of science; but he relinquished all his honours among the *elite* of learning to bear the reproach of Christ. Neither great men nor learned men could hold him when his conscience had once pointed out the path. Be sure, also, that he had to tear himself away from many a friend. In the course of forty years one would suppose he had formed associations that were very dear and tender, but to the regret of many he associated himself with the unpopular party, whom the king sought to crush, and therefore no courtier could henceforth acknowledge him. For forty years he lived in the solitude of the desert, and he only returned to smite the land of Egypt with plague, so that his separation from all his former friendships must have been complete. But, O true-hearted spirit, should it break every fond connection, should it tear thy soul away from all thou lovest, if thy God requires it, let the sacrifice be made at once. If thy faith hath shown thee that to occupy thy present position involves complicity with error or sin, then break away, by God's help, without further parley. Let not the nets of the fowler hold thee, but as God gives thee freedom, mount untrammelled and praise thy God for liberty. Jesus left the angels of heaven for your sake; can you not leave the best of company for his sake?

But I marvel most at Moses when I consider not only who he was and the company he had to forego, but *the persons with whom he must associate*, for in truth the followers of the true God were not, in their own persons, a loveable people at that time. Moses was willing to take upon himself the reproach of Christ, and to bear the affliction of God's people when, I venture to observe again, there was nothing very attractive in the people themselves. They were wretchedly poor, they were scattered throughout all the land as mere drudges, engaged in brickmaking, and this brickmaking, which was imposed upon them for the very purpose of breaking down their spirit, had done its work all too well. They were utterly spiritless, they possessed no leaders, and were not prepared to have followed them if they had arisen. When Moses, having espoused their cause, informed them that God had sent him they received him at first, but when the prophet's first action prompted Pharaoh to double their toil by an enactment that they should not be supplied with straw, they upbraided Moses at once; even as forty years before, when he interfered in their quarrels, one of them said, "Wilt thou slay me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?" They were literally a herd of slaves, broken down, crushed and depressed. It is one of the worst things about slavery that it unmans men and unfits them even for generations for the full enjoyment of liberty. Even when slaves receive liberty we cannot expect them to act as those would do who were free born, for in slavery the iron enters into the very soul and binds the spirit. Thus it is clear that the Israelties were not very select company for the highly educated Moses to unite with: though a prince he must make common cause with the poor; though a free man he must mingle with slaves; though a man of education he must mix with ignorant people; though a man of spirit he must associate with spiritless serfs. How many would have said, "No, I cannot do that; I know what church I ought to unite with if I

follow the Scriptures fully, and obey in all things my Lord's will; but then they are so poor, so illiterate, and their place of worship is so far from being architecturally beautiful. Their preacher is a plain, blunt man, and they themselves are not refined. Scarce a dozen of the whole sect can keep a carriage; I should be shut out of society if I joined with them." Have we not heard this base reasoning till we are sick of it, and yet it operates widely upon this brainless, heartless generation. Are there none left who love truth even when she wears no trappings? Are there none who love the gospel better than pomp and show? Where God raises up a Moses what cares he how poor his brethren may be? "They are God's people," says he, "and if they are very poor I must help them the more liberally. If they be oppressed and depressed, so much the more reason why I should come to their aid. If they love God and his truth I am their fellow-soldier, and will be at their side in the battle." I have no doubt Moses thought all this over, but his mind was made up, and he took his place promptly.

In addition to other matters, one mournful thing must be said of Israel, which must have cost Moses much pain. He found that among God's people there were some who brought no glory to God, and were very weak in their principles. He did not judge the whole body by the faults of some, but by their standards and their institutions: and he saw that the Israelites, with all their faults, were the people of God, while the Egyptians, with all their virtues, were not so. Now, it is for each one of us to try the spirits by the word of God, and then fearlessly to follow out our convictions. Where is Christ recognised as the head of the church? Where are the Scriptures really received as the rule of faith? Where are the doctrines of grace clearly believed? Where are the ordinances practised as the Lord delivered them? For with that people will I go, their cause shall be my cause, their God shall be my God. We look not for a perfect church this side of heaven, but we do look for a church free from Popery and sacramentarianism and false doctrine; and if we cannot find one we will wait until we can, but with falsehood and priestcraft we will never enter into fellowship. If there be faults with the brethren it is our duty to bear with them patiently, and pray for grace to overcome the evil; but with Papists and Rationalists we must not join in affinity, or God will require it at our hands.

Consider now *what Moses left by siding with Israel.* He left honour—he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" he left pleasure—for he refused to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" and, according to our apostle, he left wealth as well, for in taking up the reproach of Christ he renounced "the treasures of Egypt." Very well, then, if it comes to this, if to follow God and to be obedient to him I have to lose my position in society and become a Pariah; if I must abjure a thousand pleasures, and if I am deprived of emoluments and income, yet the demands of duty must be complied with. Martyrs gave their lives of old, are there none left who will give their livings? If there be true faith in a man's heart he will not deliberate which of the two to choose, beggary or compromise with error. He will esteem the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

Consider yet once more *what Moses espoused* when he left the court. He espoused abounding trial, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with

the people of God;" and he espoused reproach, for he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." O, Moses, if you must needs join with Israel there is no present reward for you; you have nothing to gain but all to lose; you must do it out of pure principle, out of love to God, out of a full persuasion of the truth, for the tribes have no honours or wealth to bestow. You will receive affliction, and that is all. You will be called a fool, and people will think they have good reason for so doing. It is just the same to-day. If any man to-day will go without the camp to seek the Lord, if he go forth unto Christ without the gate, he must do it out of love to God and to his Christ, and for no other motive. The people of God have no benefices or bishoprics to offer; they therefore beseech men to count the cost. When a fervent convert said to our Lord, "Lord I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," he received for answer, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay my head." To this hour truth offers no dowry but herself to those who will espouse her. Abuse, contempt, hard fare, ridicule, misrepresentation—these are the wages of consistency; and if better comes it is not to be reckoned on. If any man be of a noble enough spirit to love the truth for truth's sake, and God for God's sake, and Christ for Christ's sake, let him enlist with those of like mind; but if he seek anything over and above that, if he desire to be made famous, or to gain power, or to be well beneficed, he had better keep his place among the cowardly dirt-eaters who swarm around us. The church of God bribes no man. She has no mercenary rewards to proffer, and would scorn to use them if she had. If to serve the Lord be not enough reward, let those who look for more go their selfish way: if heaven be not enough, let those who can despise it seek their heaven below. Moses, in taking up with the people of God, decidedly, and once for all, acted most disinterestedly, without any promise from the right side, or any friend to aid him in the change; for the truth's sake, for the Lord's sake, he renounced everything; content to be numbered with the down-trodden people of God.

II. Now, secondly, what was THE SOURCE OF MOSES' DECISION? Scripture says it was faith, otherwise some would insist upon it that it was the force of blood. "He was by birth an Israelite, and therefore," say they, "the instincts of nature prevailed." Our text assigns a very different reason. We know right well that the sons of godly parents are not led to adore the true God by reason of their birth. Grace does not run in the blood; sin may, but righteousness does not. Who does not remember sons of renowned lovers of the gospel, who are now far gone in Ritualism? It was faith, not blood, which impelled Moses in the way of truth. Neither was it eccentricity which led him to espouse the side which was oppressed. We have sometimes found a man of pedigree and position who has associated with persons of quite another rank and condition, simply because he never could act like anybody else, and must live after his own odd fashion. It was not so with Moses. All his life through you cannot discover a trace of eccentricity in him: he was sober, steady, law-abiding; what if I say he was a *con*centric man, for his centre was in the right place, and he moved according to the dictates of prudence. Not thus can his decision be

accounted for. Neither was he hurried on by some sudden excitement when there burned within his soul fierce patriotic fires which made him more fervent than prudent. No, there may have been some haste in his slaying the Egyptian on the first occasion, but then he had forty more years to think it over, and yet he never repented his choice, but held on to the oppressed people of God, and still refused to think of himself as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. It was faith then, faith alone, that enabled the prophet of Sinai to arrive at his decision, and to carry it out.

What faith had he? First, he had faith in Jehovah. It is possible that Moses had seen the various gods of Egypt, even as we see them now in the drawings which have been copied from their temples and pyramids. We find there the sacred cat, the sacred ibis, the sacred crocodile, and all kinds of creatures which were reverenced as deities; and in addition there were hosts of strange idols, compounded of man, and beast, and bird, which stand in our museums to this day, and were once the objects of the idolatrous reverence of the Egyptians. Moses was weary of all this symbolism. He knew in his own heart that there was one God, one only God, and he would have nothing to do with Amun, Pthah, or Maut. Truly, my very soul cries to God, that noble spirits may in these days grow weary of the gods of ivory, and ebony, and silver, which are adored under the name of crosses and crucifixes, and may come to abominate that most degrading and sickening of all idolatries in which a man makes a god with flour and water, bows down before it, and then swallows it, thus sending his god into his belly, and, I might say worse. The satirist said of the Egyptians, "O happy people, whose gods grow in their own gardens;" we may say with equal force, O happy people, whose gods are baked in their own ovens! Is not this the lowest form of superstition that ever debased the intellect of man. The fetish worship of the negro is not more grovelling O that brave and true hearts may be led to turn away from such idolatry, and abjure all association with it, and say, "No, I cannot, and dare not. There is one God that made heaven and earth, there is a pure Spirit who upholdeth all things by the power of his might, I will worship him alone; and I will worship him after his own law, without images or other symbols, for has he not forbidden them." Has he not said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God"? Oh that God would give to men faith to know there is but one God, and that the one God is not to be worshipped with man-ordained rites and ceremonies, for he is "a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth!" That one truth, if it were to come with power from heaven into men's minds, would shiver St. Peter's and St. Paul's from their topmost cross to their lowest crypt; for what do these two churches teach us now but sheer clear idolatry, the one of rule and the other by permission, for now men who boldly worship what they call the "sacred elements" have leave and license to exercise their craft within the Church of England. Every man who loves his God should shake his skirts clear of these

abominations, and I pray God that we may find many a Moses who shall do so.

The faith of Moses also rested in Christ. "Christ had not come," says one. Nay, but he was to come, and Moses looked to that coming one. He cast his eye through the ages that were to intervene, and he saw before him the Shiloh of whom dying Jacob sang. He knew the ancient promise which had been given to the fathers, that in the seed of Abraham should all the nations of the earth be blessed; and he was willing, in order to share in the blessing, to take his part in the reproach. Dear Friends, we shall never have a thorough faith in God unless we have also faith in Jesus Christ. Men have tried long, and tried hard, to worship the Father apart from the Son; but there stands it, and it always will be so: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." You get away from the worship of the Father if you do not come through the mediation and atonement of the Son of God. Now, though Moses did not know concerning Christ all that is now revealed to us, yet he had faith in the coming Messiah, and that faith gave strength to his mind. Those are the men to suffer who have received Christ Jesus the Lord. If any man should ask me what made the Covenanters such heroes as they were; what made our Puritanic forefathers fearless before their foes; what led the Reformers to protest and the martyrs to die; I would reply, it was faith in the Invisible God, coupled with faith in that dear Son of God who is God Incarnate. Believing in him they felt such love within their bosoms, that for love of him they could have died a thousand deaths.

But then, in addition to this, Moses had faith in reference to God's people. Upon that I have already touched. He knew that the Israelites were God's chosen, that Jehovah had made a covenant with them, that despite all their faults, God would not break his covenant with his own people, and he knew, therefore, that their cause was God's cause, and being God's cause it was the cause of right, the cause of truth. Oh, it is a grand thing when a man has such faith that he says, "It is nothing to me what other people do, or think, or believe; I shall act as God would have me. It is nothing to me what I am commanded to do by my fellow-creatures, nothing to me what fashion says, nothing to me what my parents say, as far as religion is concerned; the truth is God's star, and I will follow wherever it may lead me. If it should make me a solitary man, if I should espouse opinions which no one else ever believed in, if I should have to go altogether outside the camp, and break away from every connection, all this shall be as immaterial to me as the small dust of the balance; but if a matter be true I will believe it, and I will propound it, and I will suffer for its promulgation; and if another doctrine be a lie I will not be friends with it, nay, not for a solitary moment; I will not enter into fellowship with falsehood, no, not for an hour. If a course be right and true, through floods and flames if Jesus leads me, I will pursue it.." That seems to me to be the right spirit, but where do you find it now-a-days? The modern spirit mutters, "We are all right, every one of us." He who says "yes" is right, and he who says "no" is also right. You hear a man talk with mawkish sentimentality which he calls Christian charity. "Well, I am of opinion that if a man is a Mahometan, or a Catholic,

or a Mormonite, or a dissenter, if he is sincere, he is all right." They do not quite include devil worshippers, Thugs and cannibals yet, but if things go on they will accept them into the happy family of the Broad Church. Such is the talk and cant of this present age, but I bear my witness that there is no truth in it, and I call upon every child of God to protest against it, and, like Moses, to declare that he can have no complicity with such a confederacy. There is truth somewhere, let us find it; the lie is not of the truth, let us abhor it. There is a God, let us follow him, and it cannot be that false gods are gods too. Surely truth is of some value to the sons of men, surely there must be something worth holding, something worth contending for, and something worth dying for; but it does not appear now-a-days as if men thought so. May we have a respect for God's true church in the world which abides by the apostolic word and doctrine. Let us find it out, and join with it, and at its side fight for God and for his truth!

Once again, Moses had faith in the "recompense of the reward." He said thus within himself, "I must renounce much, and reckon to lose rank, position, and treasure; but I expect to be a gainer notwithstanding, for there will be a day when God shall judge the sons of men; I expect a judgment throne with its impartial balances, and I expect that those who serve God faithfully shall then turn out to have been the wise men and the right men, while those who truckled and bowed down to gain a present ease, shall find that they missed eternity while they were snatching after time, and that they bartered heaven for a paltry mess of pottage." With this upon his mind, you could not persuade Moses that he ought to compromise, and must not be uncharitable, and ought not to judge other good people, but should be largeminded, and remember Pharaoh's daughter, and how kindly she had nurtured him, and consider what opportunities he had of doing good where he was; how he might befriend his poor brethren, what influence he might have over Pharaoh, how he might be the means of leading the princes and the people of Egypt in the right way, and perhaps God had raised him up on purpose to be there, who could tell, and so-on, and so-on, and so-on—you know the Babylonian talk, for in these days you have all read or heard the plausible arguments of the deceivableness of unrighteousness, which in these last days teaches men to do evil that good may come. Moses cared for none of these things. He knew his duty, and did it, whatever might be the consequences. Every Christian man's duty is to believe the truth, and follow the truth, and leave results with God. Who dares do that? He is a king's son. But again I say it, who dares do that in these days?

III. Thirdly, we are going to run over in our minds some of THE ARGUMENTS WHICH SUPPORTED MOSES in his decided course of following God.

The first argument would be, he saw clearly that God was God and therefore must keep his word, must bring his people up out of Egypt and give them a heritage. Now he said within himself, "I desire to be on the right side. God is almighty, God is all truthful, God is altogether just. I am on God's side, and being on God's side I will prove my truthfulness by leaving the other side altogether."

Then, secondly, we have it in the text that he perceived the pleasures of sin to be but for a season. He said to himself, "I may have but a short time to live, and even if I live to a good old age, life at the longest is still short; and when I come to the close of life what a miserable reflection it will be that I have had all my pleasure, it is all over, and now I have to appear before God as a traitorous Israelite who threw up his birthright for the sake of enjoying the pleasures of Egypt." Oh that men would measure everything in the scales of eternity! We shall be before the bar of God all of us in a few months or years, and then think you how shall we feel? One will say, "I never thought about religion at all," and another "I thought about it, but I did not think enough to come to any decision upon it. I went the way the current went." Another will say, "I knew the truth well enough, but I could not bear the shame of it, they would have thought me fanatical if I had gone through with it." Another will say, "I halted between two opinions, I hardly thought I was justified in sacrificing my children's position for the sake of being out and out a follower of truth." What wretched reflections will come over men who have sold the Saviour as Judas did! What wretched death-beds must they have who have been unfaithful to their consciences and untrue to their God! But oh! with what composure will the believer look forward to another world! He will say, "By grace I am saved, and I bless God I could afford to be ridiculed, I could bear to be laughed at. I could lose that situation, I could be turned out of that farm, and could be called a fool, and yet it did not hurt me. I found solace in the society of Christ, I went to him about it all, and I found that to be reproached for Christ was a sweeter thing than to possess all the treasures of Egypt. Blessed be his name! I missed the pleasures of the world, but they were no miss to me. I was glad to miss them, for I found sweeter pleasure in the company of my Lord, and now there are pleasures to come which shall never end." O brethren, to be out and out for Christ, to go to the end with him, even though it involve the loss of all things, this will pay in the long run. It may bring upon you much disgrace for the present, but that will soon be over, and then comes the eternal reward.

And, then, again, he thought within himself that even the pleasures, which did last for a season, while they lasted were not equal to the pleasure of being reproached for Christ's sake. This ought also to strengthen us, that the worst of Christ is better than the best of the world, that even now we have more joy as Christians, if we are sincere, than we could possibly derive from the sins of the wicked.

I have only this to say in closing. First, we ought all of us to be ready to part with everything for Christ, and if we are not we are not his disciples. "Master, thou sayest a hard thing," says one. I say it yet again, for a greater Master has said it,—"He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." "Unless a man forsake all that he has he cannot be my disciple." Jesus may not require you actually to leave anything, but you must be ready to leave everything if required.

The second observation is this—we ought to abhor the very thought of obtaining honour in this world by concealing our sentiments or by

making compromises. If there be a chance of your being highly esteemed by holding your tongue, speak at once and do not run the risk of winning such dishonourable honour. If there be a hope of people praising you because you are so ready to yield your convictions, pray God to make you like a flint never to yield again; for what more damning glory could a man have than to be applauded for disowning his principles to please his fellow-men! From this may the Lord save us!

The third teaching is that we ought to take our place with those who truly follow God and the Scriptures, even if they are not altogether what we should like them to be. The place for an Israelite is with the Israelites, the place for a Christian man is with Christian men. The place for a thorough going disciple of the Bible and of Christ is with others who are such, and even if they should happen to be the lowest in the land, and the poorest of the poor, and the most illiterate and uneducated persons of the period, what is all this if their God loves them and if they love God? Weighed in the scales of truth the least one among them is worth ten thousand of the greatest ungodly men.

Lastly, we must all of us look to our faith. Faith is the main thing. You cannot make a thorough character without sincere faith. Begin there, dear hearer. If thou art not a believer in Christ, if thou believest not in the one God, may the Lord convert thee, and give thee now that precious gift! To try and raise a character which shall be good without a foundation of faith is to build upon the sand, and to pile up wood and hay and stubble, which wood, hay, and stubble are very good things as wood, hay, and stubble, but they will not bear the fire; and as every Christian character will have to bear fire, it is well to build on the rock, and to build with such graces and fruits as will endure trial. You will have to be tried, and if you have, by sneaking through life as a coward, avoided all opposition and all ridicule, ask yourself whether you really are a disciple of that master of the house whom they called Beelzebub, whether you are truly a follower of that crucified Saviour who said, "Except a man take up his cross daily and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." Suspect the smooth places; be afraid of that perpetual peace which Christ declares he came to break. He says, "I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword." He came to bring fire upon the earth; and "what would I," said he, "if it be already kindled."

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas.

Sure I must fight if I would reign,
Increase my courage, Lord,
I'd bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by thy Word." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs i.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SALVATION ALL OF GRACE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By grace are ye saved."—Ephesians ii. 8.

OTHER Divine attributes are manifest in salvation. The wisdom of God devised the plan; the power of God executes in us the work of salvation; the immutability of God preserves and carries it on—in fact, all the attributes of God are magnified in the salvation of a sinner: but at the same time the text is most accurate, since grace is the fountain-head of salvation, and is most conspicuous throughout. Grace is to be seen in our election; for "there is a remnant according to the election of grace, and if by grace then it is no more of works." Grace is manifestly revealed in our redemption, for ye know therein the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is utterly inconceivable that any soul could have deserved to be redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. The mere thought is abhorrent to every holy mind. Our calling is also of grace, too, for "He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." By grace also we are justified; for over and over again the apostle insists upon this grand and fundamental truth. We are not justified before God by works in any measure or in any degree, but by faith alone; and the apostle tells us "it is of faith, that it might be by grace." We see a golden thread of grace running through the whole of the Christian's history, from his election before all worlds, even to his admission to the heaven of rest. Grace, all along, "reigns through righteousness unto eternal life," and "where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound." There is no point in the history of a saved soul upon which you can put your finger and say, "In this instance he is saved by his own deservings." Every single blessing which we receive from God, comes to us by the channel of free favour, revealed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Boasting is excluded, because deservings are excluded. Merit is an unknown word in the Christian church; it is

banished once for all; and our only shoutings over foundation or top-stone are, "Grace, grace unto it!" Perhaps the apostle is the more earnest in insisting upon this truth here, and in many other places, because this is a point against which the human heart raises the greatest objection. Every man by nature fights against salvation by grace. Though we have nothing good in ourselves, we all think we have; though we have all broken the law, and have lost all claim upon divine regard, yet we are all proud enough to fancy that we are not quite so bad as others; that there are some mitigating circumstances in our offences, and that we can, in some measure, appeal to the justice as well as to the compassion of God. Hence the apostle puts it so strongly, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."

The statement of the text means just this, that we all need saving—saving from our sins, and saving from the consequences of them; and that if we are saved it is not because of any works which we have already performed. Who among us, upon looking back at his past life, would dare to say that he deserves salvation? Neither are we saved on account of any works foreseen which are yet to be performed by us. We have made no bargain with God that we will give him so much service for so much mercy; neither has he made any covenant with us of this character; he has freely saved us, and if we serve him in the future, as we trust we shall, with all our heart and soul and strength, even then we shall have no room for glorying, because our works are wrought in us of the Lord. What have we even then which we have not received? We are saved, not because of any mitigating circumstances with regard to our transgressions, nor because we were excusable on account of our youth, or of our ignorance, or any other cause; we are not saved because there were some good points in our character, which ought not to be overlooked, or some hopeful indications of better things in the future. Ah, no; "By grace are ye saved." That clear and unqualified statement sweeps away all supposition of any deserving on our part, or any thought of deserving. It is not a case of a prisoner at the bar who pleads "not guilty," and who escapes because he is innocent; far from it, for we are guilty beyond all question. It is not even a case of a prisoner who pleads "guilty," but at the same time mentions certain circumstances which render his offence less heinous; far from it, for our offence is heinous to the last degree, and our sin deserves the utmost wrath of God. But ours is the case of a criminal confessing his guilt and owning that he deserves the punishment, offering no extenuation and making no apology, but casting himself upon the absolute mercy of the judge, desiring him for pity's sake to look upon his misery and spare him in compassion. As condemned criminals we stand before God when we come to him for mercy. We are not in a state of probation, as some say; our probation is over: we are already lost, "condemned already," and our only course is to cast ourselves upon the sovereign mercy of God in Christ Jesus; not uttering a syllable of claim, but simply saying, "Mercy, Lord, I crave, undeserved, mercy according to thy lovingkindness, and thy grace in Christ Jesus." "By grace are ye saved." This is true of every saint on earth and every saint in heaven,

altogether true without a single sentence of qualification. No man is saved except as the result of the free favour and unbought mercy of God, not of deserving, not of debt, but entirely and altogether because the Lord "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy," and he wills to bestow his favour on the unworthy sons of men.

I. This simple truth we do not mean to work out this morning, doctrinally or controversially, but to use it for practical purposes, and the first is this—THIS GREAT DOCTRINE SHOULD INSPIRE EVERY SINNER WITH HOPE. If salvation be altogether of the free favour and grace of God, then—who among us dare despair? Who in this place shall be so wicked as to sit down in sullenness and say, "It is impossible for me to be saved"?

For first, my brethren, if salvation be of mercy only, it is clear that *our sin is by no means an impediment to our salvation.* If it were of justice our transgression of the law would render our salvation utterly impossible; but if the Lord deals with us upon quite another footing, and says, "I will forgive them freely," that very promise presupposes sin. If the Lord speaks of mercy, that very word takes it for granted that we are guilty, or else there would be no room for mercy at all. The very statement that we are saved by grace implies that we are fit objects for grace; and who are fit objects for grace but the guilty, the wretched, the condemned. O sons of men, the law stops your mouths, and makes you silently own that you are guilty before God, but the gospel opens the mouth of the dumb by declaring that "Christ died for the ungodly," and that "he came into the world to save sinners." If mercy come into the field, sin is swallowed up in forgiveness, and unworthiness ceases to be a barrier for love. Is not this both clear and comforting?

Now, observe, that *this prevents the despair which might arise in any heart on account of some one especial sin.* I meet with many whose terror of conscience arises from one particular crime. Had they not committed that crimson sin, they consider that they might have been pardoned, but now they are in an evil case. "Surely," say they, "that sin, like an iron bolt, has fast closed the gates of heaven against me." And yet it cannot be so if salvation be of grace. Whatever the sin may be, its greatness will only serve to illustrate the great grace of God. Undeserved mercy can pardon one sin as well as another, if the soul confess it. If God acted on the rule of merit with us, then no sin would be pardonable under any circumstances; but when he deals with us in a way of grace he can pass by any offence for which we seek forgiveness. The great sinner is so much the fitter object for great mercy. He who hath but little sin, can, as it were, but draw forth little mercy from God to blot it out; but he who is guilty of some great, crowning, damning sin, he it is to whom the heights and depths of divine mercy may be displayed; and if I speak to such an one this morning I would look upon him with joyful eyes. Sorrowful as he is, I am thankful to have found out such an one. Thou art a rare platform on which my Lord's love may display itself, because thou knowest thyself to be so utterly lost a sinner. Thou art but a black foil to set forth the brilliant diamond of my Master's grace. Thy foulness shall but illustrate the virtue of his precious blood, and thy crimson sin, by yielding in a

moment to the precious blood, shall only show how great is his power to save.

It is clear, too, that *if the sinner's despair should arise from the long continuance, multitude, and great aggravation of his sins, there is no ground for it.* For if salvation be of pure mercy only, why should not God forgive ten thousand sins as well as one? "Oh," sayest thou, "I see why he should not." Then thou seest more than is true; for once come to grace, you have done with bounds and limits. Know, moreover, that "his thoughts are not your thoughts. And as the heavens are higher than the earth so are his thoughts higher than your thoughts and his ways than your ways." To blot out ten thousand sins is with him no effort of grace, for "he is plenteous in mercy." He has been forgiving the sons of men ever since the first sinner crossed the threshold of Paradise, and he delights to do it; so that, guilty ones, I see in the multitude of your sins only so much the more room for the Lord to exercise his own delightful attribute of mercy. If he delights to blot out one sin, then he delights ten thousand times more to blot out ten thousand sins. If thou wilt look at it in that light, though thy transgressions may be as many as the hairs on thy head or as the sands on the sea shore, innumerable, thou needest not for a moment think thou art cast away from hope. The Lord's mercy is a sea which cannot be filled, though mountains of sin be cast into its midst; it is like Noah's flood, which covers all and drowns even the mountain-tops of heaven-defying sins. I wish to speak right home to the hearts of those who are in trouble and seeking mercy, and to them I say,—do you not see that if salvation be of grace alone, then *the depravity of thy nature does not shut thee up in despair?* What though thy nature be inclined to sin, and especially inclined to some sins; what if thou be naturally angry and passionate, or if thou be proud and covetous; what if thou be in thy natural disposition sceptical or lustful, yet from the grace of God hope flows even for thee. If the Lord were to deal with thee according to thy constitution and nature, then, indeed, it were a hopeless case with thee: but if he blesses thee, not because thou art good, but because thou needest to be blest; if he looks upon thee in mercy, not because thou art beautiful, but because thou art sick unto death, and defiled, and needest to be healed and cleansed; if it be thy misery and not thy merit which he considers, then thou art yet in the land of hope. However fallen thou mayest be, thou mayest yet be raised up. Why should not the Lord take the most depraved, and abandoned, and obstinate among us, and renew his nature and make of him a miracle of grace? Would it not magnify his mercy if he should make of such an one the opposite of what he now is, tender in heart, holy in spirit, devout in character, ardent in love, and fervent in prayer? He can do it. Glory be to his name, he can do it; and now that he deals with us in grace let us hope he will do it in the case of many.

Remember, too, that *any spiritual unfitness which may exist in a man should not shut him out from a hope, since God deals with us in mercy.* I hear you say, "I believe God can save me, but I am so impenitent." Yes, and I say it again, if thou wert to stand on terms of debt with God, thy hard heart would shut thee out of hope. How could he bless

such a wretch as thou art, whose heart is a heart of stone? But if he deal with thee entirely upon another ground, namely, his mercy, why I think I hear him say, "Poor hard-hearted sinner, I will pity thee, and take away thy heart of stone, and give thee a heart of flesh." Dost thou say, "I cannot repent?" I know the criminality of that sad fact. It is a great sin not to be able to repent; but then the Lord will not look upon thee from the point of what thou oughtest to be, but he will consider what he can make thee, and he will give thee repentance. Has not his Son gone up to heaven, "exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sins"? Do I hear thee confess that thou canst not believe? Now, the absence of faith from thee is a great evil, yea a horrible evil; but then the Lord is dealing with thee on terms of grace, and does not say, "I will not smite thee because thou dost not believe," but he saith, "I will give thee faith," for faith is "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." He works our faith in us, and has pity upon us, and takes away the unbelieving heart, and gives the tender heart, the believing heart, in the presence of the cross of Christ. Oh, though I were black as the devil with past sin, and vile as the devil with innate depravity, yet, if the Lord's mercy looked upon me could he not forgive the past and change my nature, and make me, as bright a seraph as Gabriel before his throne? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" O sinner, what a door of hope there ought to be open to thee in this truth, that salvation is altogether of grace.

For now, to sum up all in a word, there is no supposable circumstance or incident, or anything connected with any man, that can shut him out of hope if he seek forgiveness through the Saviour's blood. Whoever thou mayest be, and whatever thou mayest have done, grace can come and save thee. I say again, if thy character be the question at issue, thou art a lost man; if thy power to amend thy character be the hinge of the business, thou art a lost man; but if the grace that pardons and the power that amends both come from God, why shouldest thou be a lost man? Why should the harlot perish? Why should the thief perish? Why should the adulterer perish? Why should the murderer perish? "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." Ye have heaped up your sins, but God will heap up his mercies; ye have highly aggravated your transgressions; ye have sinned against light and knowledge; ye have done evil with both hands greedily; but, thus saith the Lord, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Thus much upon the first statement, that this doctrine ought to give hope to the sinner.

II. Secondly, THIS DOCTRINE AFFORDS DIRECTION TO THE SINNER, as to how to act before his God in seeking mercy. Clearly, O soul, if salvation be of grace alone, it would be a very wrong course of action to plead that thou art not guilty, or to extenuate thy faults before God:

that were to go upon the wrong tack altogether. If salvation be by thy merit, or by an absence of demerit, then thou wouldst be right enough to set up a good character as a plea, though I believe that in the trial thou wouldest mightily break down, for thou art as full of sin as an egg is of meat, and thy sin is as damnable as hell itself, and therefore it were vain for thee to plead innocence; but if thou couldest plead it, it is the wrong plea. If salvation be of grace, then go to the Lord and confess thy sin and transgression, and ask for grace. Do not for a moment attempt to show that thou hast no need of grace, for that were folly indeed. What more foolish than for a beggar to plead that he is not in want? Do not shut the door of grace in thine own face. To say, "I am not guilty," is to say "I do not want mercy;" to say "I have not transgressed," is to say, "I do not need to be forgiven," and how better couldest thou commit spiritual suicide than by such pleading?

Neither, O sinner, hope to propitiate the Lord with gifts and sacrifices. If salvation be of grace, how durst thou think to buy it? If he saith he gives it freely, bring not with thee any bribe in thy hand; for in so doing thou wilt insult and anger him. Indeed, what couldest thou bring to him when Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt sacrifice? If thou couldest give him rivers of oil that should deluge a continent, or seas of sacrificial blood broad as the Pacific, yet couldest thou not for a moment render thyself acceptable with him. Try it not therefore. Venture on no ceremonies. Rest not in rituals. If salvation be of grace, accept it as a free gift, and bless the giver. Do not think to dress thyself in garments of outward religiousness, or to borrow virtue from a fellow-man who claims to be a priest; but since salvation is of free mercy, go and cast thyself on that free mercy. That is to act according to the dictates of prudence. Thy true course is this. Since God is willing to show his mercy, go and confess that thou needest that mercy. Aggravate thy sin in the confession, if thou canst. Instead of trying to make it appear white, try to see its unutterable blackness. Say that thou art without excuse, justly condemned, for thy transgressions. I warrant thee thou shalt never go beyond the truth in stating thy sin, for that were quite impossible. A man lying on the field of battle wounded, when the surgeon comes round, or the soldiers with the ambulance, does not say, "Oh, mine is a little wound," for he knows that then they would let him lie; but he cries out, "I have been bleeding here for hours, and am nearly dead with a terrible wound," for he thinks that then he will gain speedier relief; and when he gets into the hospital he does not say to the nurse, "Mine is a small affair; I shall soon get over it"; but he tells the truth to the surgeon in the hope that he may set the bone at once, and that double care may be taken. Ah, sinner, do thou so with God. The right way to plead is to plead thy misery, thine impotence, thy danger, thy sin. Lay bare thy wounds before the Lord, and as Hezekiah spread Sennacherib's letter before the Lord, spread thy sins before him with many a tear and many a cry, and say, "Lord, save me from all these; save me from these black and foul things, for thy infinite mercy's sake." Confess thy sin; wisdom dictates that thou shouldest do so, since salvation is of grace. And then yield thyself up to God; capitulate at discretion;

make no terms with him, but say, "Here I stand before thee, O my Maker; I have offended thee; I yield to thee, because thou hast said thou wilt deal with me on terms of grace; behold I cast myself at thy feet; the weapons of my rebellion I cast from my hands for ever; I desire that thou wouldest take me and make me what thou wouldest have me to be; and seeing thou art a God of grace, I beseech thee to have pity upon me. Thou hast appointed a way of salvation by Jesus Christ, Oh, save me in that way, I entreat thee."

Now, mark, I want to dwell upon this next point,—because salvation is of grace it directs the guilty as to how to plead before God. When we are praying and pleading we sometimes feel we want a help to guide us in the pleading. Let this guide you. Take care that all your pleas with God are consistent with the fact that he saves by his grace. Never bring a legal plea, or a plea that is based upon self, for it will be an offence to God; whereas, if thine argument be based on grace, it will have a sweet savour to him. Let me teach thee, seeking sinner, for a moment how to pray. Let it be in this way. Plead with God thy miserable and undone condition; tell him thou art utterly lost if he do not save thee. Tell him thou art already lost, so that thou canst not help thyself hand or foot in this matter, if he do not come to thy rescue with the fulness of his power and love. Tell him that thou art afraid to die and to come before his righteous bar, for unless he save thee hell will be thy portion. Plead with him and ask him whether it will delight him that thou shouldest make thy bed in hell. Say to him, "Shall the dead praise thee? Shall the condemned set forth thy praise?" Show him the imminence of thy danger. He knows it, but let him see that thou knowest it, and this will be good pleading with his mercy. "Save me, O Lord, for if ever soul needed saving, if ever soul were in the jaws of destruction, I am that soul, therefore have pity upon me." Thus pour out your heart before him. Then humbly urge the suitableness of his mercy to you. "Lord, thou art merciful, thy mercy will find ample scope in me. Does thy grace seek out sin to purge it away? It is here, Lord; I teem with it; my heart swarms with evils. If thou art pitiful, here is a heart which bleeds and is ready to perish. Oh, if thou be indeed a physician, here is a sick soul that wants thee; if thou art ready to forgive, here are sins that need forgiving. Come to me, Lord, for thy mercy will find a grievousness of misery in me. Besides, is not thy mercy free. It is true I do not deserve it, but thou dost not give it to men because of their deserving, else were it no grace and mercy at all. Let thy free mercy light on me. Why shouldest thou pass me by? If I be the vilest of the sons of men thou wilt be the more gracious if thou dost look upon me. What though I have forgotten thee these many years and have even despised thy love, will it not be the greater mercy on thy part to turn and give thy free grace to me, even to me?" Then argue with him the plenteousness of his grace. Say to him, "Lord, thy mercy is very great, I know it is. 'According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.' If thou wert a little God and thou hadst but little mercy, I should have but little hope in thee; but oh, thou art so great and glorious, thou can'st cast my transgressions behind thy back. By the greatness of thy compassion, then, look thou on me."

It is well also to return to the first plea and repeat it, saying, "Lord, because thou hast this great mercy and I need it, look on my impotence this day. I am so weak, I cannot come to thee unless thou come to me. Thou biddest me repent, but see how hard my heart is; thou commandest me to believe in Jesus, but my unbelief is very strong; thou tellest me to look to thy dear Son upon the cross, but I cannot see him for my tears, which blind these weary eyes. Master, come to the rescue, come and help thy servant, for thou art strong, though I be weak. Thou canst break my heart though I cannot break it, and thou canst open my poor bleared eyes, though I cannot as yet see as I would see the Saviour Jesus Christ. Oh! by thy power and mercy save a weak, dead sinner."

And then, if you feel as if you wanted some other plea, begin to plead his promises. Say:

> "Thou hast promised to forgive
> All who on thy Son believe;
> Lord, I know thou canst not lie;
> Give me Christ or else I die."

"Thou hast said that if the wicked forsake his way and turn unto thee he shall live. Lord, I turn to thee. Receive me. Thou hast said that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Thou hast declared that the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin. Go not back from thy word, O God. Since thou art dealing with men on terms of grace, keep thy promise and let thy rich, free mercy come to me."

I know what all this means by experience. I have gone over all these pleas by the week together, and pleaded with God that he would have mercy upon me. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him from all his fears." Therefore, bear I testimony unto you, O seeking souls, that this is the way to move his heart. Go upon the plan of grace, and plead his love. Not your deservings, but your undeservings; not your profession of what you hope to do, but your acknowledgment of your misery, will have power with him.

I have found it sweet work sometimes to plead with God his mercy in the gifts of Christ. Let me help thee, sinner, to do it, and may the Spirit help thee. Say thou unto God thus, "Lord, thou hast given thine only begotten Son to die; surely he need not have died for the righteous; he died for the guilty; I am such an one; Lord, wilt thou give thy Son for sinners, and then cast sinners away? Didst thou nail him to the cross only for a mockery, that we might come to that cross, and not find pity? O thou God of mercy, in the gift of thy Son thou hast done so much that thou canst not draw back; thou must save sinners, now that thou hast given Jesus to die for them."

Then plead with Jesus the compassion of his heart. Tell him that he said he would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Pluck him by the sleeve, and say, "Thou hast said 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.'" Tell him that it was written of him, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Tell him that thou hast heard that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;"

and say to him, "Hast thou lost thy compassion, Saviour? Wilt thou not dart a glance of love on me, even me? Thou didst heal lepers, heal my leprosy. Thou didst permit the woman, whom thou didst call a dog, to come and receive blessings at thy hands; and although I be a dog, yet give the crumbs of thy mercy to me, even me." This is the style of plea that will win the day.

And then I would advise thee, if thou failest still in prayer, to go to God thus, and say to him, "Lord, thou hast sworn with an oath—'As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he would turn to me and live.' I know that thou meanest this, my God; wilt thou take pleasure then in my death, and spurn me now that I turn to thee?" Tell him that he has saved other sinners like thyself. Remind him of thy wife, or child, or friend; tell him of Saul of Tarsus; tell him of the woman that was a sinner; tell him of Rahab; and say unto him, "Lord, dost thou not delight to save great, big, black sinners? and I am just such an one. Thou hast not changed. By all that thou hast done for others, I pray thee do the like for me." And then say to him again, "I thank thee, O God, that thou hast permitted me even to pray to thee; I bless thy grace that thou hast moved me to come to thee; and as thou hast given me grace to feel my sin in a measure, wilt thou leave me to perish after all? Oh, by the grace I have received in being spared so long, in being permitted to hear thy gospel, I beseech thee to give me more grace." Then throw yourself down before him, and if you perish, perish there. Go to the cross with such pleas as these, and resolve that if it can be that a sinner may die at the cross' foot, you will die there, but nowhere else. As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, there shall never a soul perish that can cast itself upon the sovereign grace of God through Jesus Christ his Son.

III. Now, to turn away from that to a third point. A FULL CONVICTION OF THIS TRUTH WILL RECONCILE OUR HEARTS TO ALL DIVINE ORDINANCES WITH REGARD TO SALVATION. I feel in my own heart, and I think every believer here does, that if salvation be of grace, God must do as he wills with his own. None of us can say to him, "What doest thou?" If there were anything of debt, or justice, or obligation, in the matter, then we might begin to question God; but as there is none, and the thing is quite out of court as to law, and far away from rights and claims, as it is all God's free favour, we will henceforth stop our mouths and never question him. As to the persons whom he chooses to save, let him save whom he wills. His name shall be had in honour for ever, let his choice be what it may. As to the instrument by whom he saves, let him save by the coarsest speaker, or by the most eloquent; let him do what seemeth him good. If he will save by the Bible, without ministers, we will be glad to hold our tongues; and if he will save souls by one of our brethren, and not by us, we will grieve to think that we are so little fitted for his service; but still, if after doing all we can, he uses another more than us, we will say, "Blessed be his name." We will not envy our brethren. The Lord shall distribute his grace by what hands he pleases. Send, Lord, by whomsoever thou wilt send.

And here I come to the sinner again: with the two great gospel

commands we will raise no dispute. Hath he said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"? We will never raise a question against either the believing or the baptism. If the Lord chooses to say, "I will save those who trust in Christ," it is both so natural a thing that he should claim our faith, and so gracious a thing that he should give us the faith he claims of us, that we cannot question it. And even if it were not so, he has a right to make what rules he pleases. If God permits entrance only by one door, let us enter by it and raise no contention. The Lord bids thee trust in Jesus; say not in thy heart, "I would rather do or feel some wonderful matter." If he had bidden thee do some great thing wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather now that he saith to thee, simply trust in Jesus and be saved. I know if I were authorised to preach this morning that every man who would sail round the world should be saved, you would begin saving your money to make the great excursion; but when the gospel comes to you there in those very pews and aisles, and bids you now turn your eyes to the crucified Saviour and only look to him, I know if you have not learned the truth, that salvation is of grace, you will kick at that divine command; but if you know it is of grace, and only grace, you will say, "Sweet is the command of God; Lord, enable me now to trust myself with thy dear Son."

And, then, you will not quarrel with the ordinance of baptism either. I know it is very natural that you should say, "What is there in it?" I also would say, what is there in it? What can there be in a mere washing in water? If you thought there were any salvation by it meritoriously, you would have missed the track altogether; but the Lord hath put it, that "he that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved," and therefore you obey. I do not attempt to justify my Lord for so commanding, for he needs no defence from me, but if he so chooses to put it, the true heart will yield a prompt obedience to his will. If it were of merit, I could see no merit in baptism or in the believing, for surely it cannot be meritorious to believe what is true, or to have one's body washed with pure water. But salvation is of grace; and if the Lord chooses to put it so, let him put it as he wills. I am such a sinner, I will take his mercy, let him present it in what way he pleases.

As to the manner in which the Lord may be pleased to reveal himself to any one of us, I am sure that if we know that salvation is of grace, we shall never quarrel about that any more. To some of us, the Lord revealed himself on a sudden. We know when we were converted to a day. I know the place to a yard. But many others do not. The day breaks on them gradually; first twilight, then a brighter light, and afterwards comes the noon. Do not let us quarrel about that. So long as I get a Saviour, I do not mind how I get him; so long as he blots out my sins, I will not cavil about the way in which he manifests his love to me. If it be of grace, that silences everything; Jew and Gentile shut their mouths without a murmuring word, and all together sit down at the foot of the cross, no more to question, but reverently to adore.

IV. I pass over this point rapidly, for time flies. I fain would clip his wings. But I must needs introduce to you the next fact,—that the

doctrine that salvation is of grace furnishes to those who receive it A MOST POWERFUL MOTIVE FOR FUTURE HOLINESS.

A man who feels that he is saved by grace says, "Did God of his free favour blot out my sins? Then, oh, how I love him. Was it nothing but his love that saved an undeserving wretch? Then my soul is knit to him for ever," Great sin becomes in such a case no barrier to great holiness, but rather a motive for it; for he who has had much forgiven loves much, and loving much he begins at once to be in earnest in the service of him whom he loves. I put it to thee, sinner, if the Lord this morning were to appear to thee and say, "All thy sins have been blotted out," wouldst thou not love him? Ay, methinks a dog would love such a Master as that. Wouldst thou not love him? Ay, I know thou wouldst. I know you proud, self-righteous people, would not; but you real sinners, if pardon were to come to you, would you not love God with all your hearts? Assuredly you would, and then your soul would begin to burn with a desire to honour him. You would want to tell the next person you met—"The Lord has had mercy upon me; wonder of wonders, he has had mercy upon me." And then you would desire to put away everything that would displease him. Away ye sins, away ye sins; how can I defile myself with you again? And then you would desire to practise all his will, and say, "For the love I bear his name no duty shall be too difficult, no command too severe." There are none that love God like those who are saved by grace. The man who thinks to save himself by works does not love God at all; he loves himself; he is a servant working for wages, and that is the kind of servant who would turn to another master to-morrow if he could get better paid, and if the wages do not suit him he will strike. The old-fashioned servants were the best servants in the world, for they loved their masters, and if paid no wages at all would have stuck to the family for love's sake. Such are the servants of God who are saved by his grace. "Why," say they, "he has already pardoned me and saved me, and therefore my ear is bored and fastened to the door of his house to be his servant for ever; and my glory is, 'I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds.'" Such a man feels that he must perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. He will not stop short with a measure of grace; he wants immeasurable grace. He will not say, "There are some sins in me which I cannot overcome;" but by God's grace he will seek to drive out all the Amalekites. He will not say, "Up to this point I am commanded to go, but beyond that I have a licence to say, "That is my besetting sin; I cannot get rid of it." No, but loving God with all his heart he will hate sin with all his heart, and war with sin with all his might, and will never put sword in scabbard till he is perfected in the image of Christ. The Lord fires us with such ardent love as this, and I know no way by which to get it except by coming to him on terms of grace, confessing sin, receiving mercy, feeling love kindle in the heart in consequence, and thus the whole soul becomes consecrated to the Lord.

V. Lastly, I would I could handle my text as I desire and as it handles me; but the truth of my text will be A TEST FOR THIS CONGREGATION.

The way you treat this text shall well reveal what you are. It will be either a stone of stumbling to you this morning, or else a foundation stone on which you build. Is it a stone of stumbling? Did I hear you murmur, "Why, the man does not hold up morality and good works; he preaches salvation for the guilty and the vile: I do not want such a religion"? Alas! thou hast stumbled at this stumbling stone, and shalt be broken upon it. Thou shalt perish, for thou dost insult thy God by thinking thyself wiser than his word, and by fancying that thy righteousness is purer than the righteousness of Christ. Thou dost imagine thou canst force thy way to heaven by a road that is most effectually blocked up; thou dost despise the path which the Lord has opened. Beware of self-righteousness. The black devil of licentiousness destroys his hundreds, but the white devil of self-righteousness destroys his thousands. But dost thou accept this text as a foundation stone? Dost thou say, "I need grace indeed for I am guilty;" then come and take all the blessings of the covenant, for they are thine. "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and he hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away." Art thou guilty? Come and trust thy Saviour. Art thou empty? Come and be filled out of the fulness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus. Believe in Jesus now, for one act of faith sets thee free from all sin. Do not tarry for a moment, nor raise questions with thy God. Believe him capable of infinite mercy, and through Jesus Christ rest thou in him. If thou be the worst soul in the world to thine own apprehension, and the one odd man that would be left out of every catalogue of grace, now write not such things against thyself; or even if thou do, come and cast thyself upon thy God. He cannot reject thee; or if he should, thou wouldst be the first that ever trusted in him and was confounded. Come and try. Oh! that his Spirit may bring thee to Jesus at this very moment, and that in heaven there may be joy in the presence of the angels of God because a soul has confided in the grace of God and found immediate pardon, instantaneous salvation, through the precious blood of Christ. The Lord bless every one of you.

Oh, how I would like that every soul here should be washed in the blood of Christ this morning. Would God that every one of you were robed in the righteousness of Christ this day, and prepared to enter into his rest. Pray for it, Christian brethren and sisters. Why should we not have it? Why, this congregation, great as it may seem comparatively, is very little to God. Why should there be one left out? Let your prayers encircle the whole house and bear the entire audience up to God, and lay it before him and say, "By thy mercy and by thy loving-kindness, save all this gathered company, for Christ's sake." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Romans x.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE HEALING OF ONE BORN BLIND.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 11TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind."—John ix. 32.

THAT was quite true: there was no instance recorded in Scripture or in profane history at the time when this man spoke, of any person who was born blind having obtained his sight. I believe it was in the year 1728 that the celebrated Dr. Cheselden, of St. Thomas's Hospital, for the first time in the world's history achieved the marvel of giving sight to a man who had been blind from his youth up, and since then the operation of couching the eyes has been several times successfully performed upon persons who were born blind. This man was, however, quite correct in the statement that then, and in his day, neither by skilful surgery nor even by miracle had birth-blindness been healed. No doubt this man was a great student in the matter of blindness; it touched so nearly his own consciousness, since he himself dwelt beneath its perpetual shadow. He was the one man in the city who understood the subject thoroughly; but, alas, by all his researches he found no ground for hope. Having learned the whole history of blindness and its cure, this man had come to the assured conviction that none ever had been healed who were in his plight,—a mournful conclusion indeed for him. Our Lord Jesus did for him what never had been done before for any man. This pleasing fact seems to me to be full of consolation to any persons here present who labour under the idea that theirs is a most peculiar and hopeless case. It probably is not so solitary and special a case as you think; but even if we grant your supposition, there is no room for despair since Jesus delights to open up new paths of grace. Our Lord is inventive in love; he devises new modes of mercy. It is his joy to find out and relieve those whose miserable condition has baffled all other help. His mercy is not bound by precedents. He preserves a freshness and originality of love. If you can find no instance in which a person like yourself has ever been saved you should not, therefore, conclude that you must necessarily be lost; but, rather, you

should believe in him who doeth great wonders, yea, and marvels unsearchable in the way of grace. He doeth as he wills, and his will is love. Have hope that inasmuch as he sees in you a singular sinner, he will make of you a singular trophy of his power to pardon and to bless. It was so with this man's eyes: if never eyes that had been born blind were opened before, Jesus Christ would do it, and the greater would be the glory brought to his name by the miracle. Jesus does not need shewing the way, he loves to strike out paths for himself, and the greater the room for his mercy the better he likes the road.

I purpose this morning gathering instruction from the particular expression, which the healed man here used. May the Holy Spirit make the meditation truly profitable to us.

And, first, I shall ask you to observe *the peculiarity of his case*—he was a man born blind: then, secondly, *the specialties of his cure* shall occupy a little of our attention; and, thirdly, we shall make a few remarks upon *the singular condition of the healed man* from the moment that his eyes were opened.

I. First, then, THE PECULIARITY OF HIS CASE.

It was not an instance of want of light; that might both speedily and easily have been remedied. There was light enough all around him, but the poor creature had no eyes. Now, there are millions of persons in the world who have little or no light; darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. It is the church's business to spread light on all sides, and for this work she is well qualified. We ought not to suffer any person to perish for lack of knowing the gospel. We cannot give men eyes, but we can give them light. God has placed among us his golden candlesticks and expressly said, "Ye are the lights of the world." Now, I believe that there are some persons who have eyes who, nevertheless, see but little for want of light; they are children of God, but they walk in darkness and see no light; God has given to them the spiritual faculty of sight, but as yet they are down in the mines, in the region of night and deathshade. They are imprisoned in Doubting Castle, where only a few feeble rays struggle into their dungeon. They walk like men in a mist, seeing and yet not seeing. They hear doctrines preached which are not the pure truth, the winnowed corn of the covenant, and, while their eyes are blinded with chaff and dust, they themselves are bewildered and lost in a maze. Too many in this murky light weave for themselves theories of doubt and fear which increase the gloom; their tears defile the windows of their soul. They are like men who hang up blinds and shutters to keep out the sun. They cannot see, though grace has given them eyes. May it be yours and mine by explanation and example, by teaching with the language of the lip, and the louder language of our lives, to scatter light on all sides, that those who dwell in spiritual midnight may rejoice, because for them light has sprung up.

Again, *this was not the case of a man blinded by accident.* Here, again, the help of man might be of much service. Persons who have been struck with blindness have been again recovered. Notably, is this instanced in Bible history, when Elijah struck a whole army with blindness, but afterwards prayed to God for them and they received their sight at once. There is much that we can do in cases where the

blindness is rather to be traceable to circumstances than to nature. For instance, everywhere in the world there is a degree of blindness caused by prejudice. Men judge the truth before they hear it; they form opinions about the gospel not having studied the gospel itself. Put the New Testament into their hands, entreat them to be candid, and to investigate it with their best judgments and to seek guidance from the Holy Ghost, and I believe many would see their error and amend. There are some true spirits whose mental perceptions are blinded by prejudice, who would be helped very graciously to see the truth if we would tenderly and wisely put it before them. The prejudices of education sway many in this country. We are to the backbone a very conservative people, tenacious of established error, and suspicious of any long-neglected truth. Our countrymen are not soon moved to receive the most obvious truth, unless it has been in vogue for ages. Perhaps it is better that we should be so than that we should be whirled about with every wind of doctrine and should run after every novelty, as some other nations do; but for this cause the gospel has in this country to combat a mass of prejudice. "Such were my fathers, such ought I to be." "Such our family has always been, therefore such will I be and such shall my children be." No matter how sure may be the truth that is brought before some men's minds, they will not even give it a hearing because old men good men, and men in authority have decided otherwise. Such persons assume that they are right by inheritance and orthodox by ancestry; they cannot learn anything, they have reached the fulness of wisdom and there they mean to stop. The church of God should try to remove all prejudices from human eyes from whatever sources they may come. Such opthalmia we may be able to cure, it is within our province to attempt it. Like Ananias, we may remove the scales from the eyes of some blinded Paul. When God has given eyes we may wash the dust out of them. Mingle with your fellow men, tell them what the faith is that has saved you, let them see the good works which the grace of God produces in you, and as the gospel at first removed from men's eyes the scales of Judaism, of the Greek philosophy, and of the Roman pride, so doubtless in this land and in this age it will make short work of the prejudices which some are doing their best to foster.

But this was not the case of a man who was blind by accident, and consequently not a type of an understanding darkened by prejudice. *The man was blind from his birth;* his was the blindness of nature, and, therefore, it baffled all surgical skill: and, concerning the blindness caused by human depravity, the blindness that comes with us at our birth, and continues with us till the grace of God causes us to be born again, I may say, that since the beginning of the world, it hath not been heard that any man hath opened the eyes of one whose spiritual blindness was born with him and is a part of his nature. If it be something from without that blinds me, I may recover; but if it be something from within which shuts out the light, who is he that can restore my vision? If from the beginning of my existence I am full of folly, if it be a part of my nature to be without understanding, how dense is my darkness! How hopeless is the fancy that it can ever be removed except by a divine hand! Let us think and say what we will, we are every one of us by nature born blind to spiritual things: we are not capable of perceiving

God, not capable of perceiving the gospel of his dear Son; not capable of understanding the way of salvation by faith in such a practical way as to be saved by it. Eyes have we, but we see not; understandings we have, but those understandings are perverted, they are like balances put out of gear, or a compass which forgets the pole. We judge, but we judge unrighteously; by nature we put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; we put darkness for light, and light for darkness; and this is inbred in our nature, wrought into our very constitution; you cannot get it out of man, because it is a part of the man,—it is his nature.

If you ask me why it is that man's understanding is so dark, I reply, because his whole nature is disordered by sin: his other faculties having been perverted, act upon his understanding, and prevent its acting in a proper manner. There is a confederacy of evil within, which deceives the judgment and leads it into captivity to evil affections. For instance, our carnal heart loves sin, the set of our unrenewed soul is towards evil. We were conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and we as naturally go after evil as the swine seeks out filth. Sin has a fascination for us, we are taken by it like birds with a lure, or fishes with a bait. Even those of us who have been renewed have to watch against sin, because our nature so readily inclines to it. With much diligence and great labour, we climb the ways of virtue, but the paths of sin are easy to the feet; is not that because our fallen nature inclines in that direction? You have only to relax your energy, and to loose your soul from its anchor-hold, and it drifts at once downwards towards iniquity, for so the current of nature runs. It needs much power to send us upward, but downward we go as readily as a stone falls to the ground. You know it is so; man is not as God made him, but his affections are corrupt. Now, it is certain that the affections very often sway the judgment. The balances are held unfairly, because the heart bribes the head. Even when we fancy that we are very candid we have insensible leanings. Our affections, like Eve, seduce the Adam of our understanding, and the forbidden fruit is judged to be good for food. The smoke of the love of sin blinds our mental eye. Our desire is often father to our conclusion, we think we are judging fairly, but we are really pandering to our baser nature. We think this thing to be better because we like it better; we will not condemn a fault too severely because we have a leaning that way; neither will we commend an excellence, because it might cost our flesh too dear to be able to reach it; or the not reaching it might strike too severe a blow upon our conscience. Ah, while our natural love of sin covers the mind's eye with cataract, and even destroys its optic nerve, we need not wonder that the blindness is beyond removal by any human surgery.

Moreover, our natural pride and self-reliance revolt against the gospel; we are every one of us very important individuals. Even if we sweep a street-crossing we have a dignity of self which must not be insulted. A beggar's rags may cover as much pride as an alderman's gown. Self-importance is not restricted to any one position or grade of life. In the pride of our nature we are all accounted by ourselves to be both great and good, and that which would in any way lower us we repudiate as unreasonable and absurd; we cannot see it, and are angry that others should. He who makes us suspect our

own nothingness teaches a doctrine hard to be understood. Pride will not and cannot understand the doctrines of the cross because they ring her death-knell. In consequence of our natural self-sufficiency we all aspire to enter heaven by efforts and deservings of our own. We may deny human merit as a doctrine, but flesh and blood everywhere lusts after it; we want to save ourselves by feelings if we cannot by doings, and to this we cling as for dear life. When the gospel comes with its sharp axe, and says, "Down with this tree! your grapes are gall, your apples are poison, your very prayers need to be repented of, your tears need to be wept over, your holiest thoughts are unholy, you must be born again, and you must be saved through the merits of another, by the free, undeserved favour of God," then straightway all our manliness, dignity, and excellence stand up in indignation and we resolve never to accept salvation on such terms. That refusal assumes the shape of a want of power to understand the gospel. We do not and cannot understand the gospel, because our notions of ourselves stand in the way. We start with wrong ideas of self, and so the whole business is made confusion, and we ourselves are blinded.

Again, beloved, one reason why our understanding does not and cannot see spiritual things, is because we judge spiritual things by our senses. Imagine a person who should take a foot rule as his standard of everything which exists in nature, and conceive that this man with his foot rule in his pocket becomes an astronomer. He looks through the telescope and he observes the fixed stars. He is told when he takes out his foot rule that it is quite out of place in connection with the heavens, he must give up his feet and inches, and calculate by millions of miles. He is indignant. He will not be deluded by such enthusiasm. He is a man of common sense, and a foot rule is a thing which he can see and handle; millions of miles are mere matters of faith, no one has ever travelled them, and he does not believe in them. The man effectually closes his own eyes; his understanding cannot develop within such limits. Thus we measure God's corn with our own bushel; we cannot be brought to believe that "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts." If we find it hard to forgive, we dream that it is the same with God. Every spiritual truth is acted upon in the same way. We propose to measure the ocean of divine love in thimble-fulls, and the sublime truths of revelation we estimate by drops of the bucket. We shall never be able to reach the thoughts and things of God while we persist in judging after the sight of the eyes, according to the measure of an earth-bound, carnal mind.

Our understanding also has become unshipped and out of gear, from the fact that we are at a distance from God, and that consequently we do not believe in him. If we lived near to God, and habitually recognised that in him we live and move and have our being, we should accept everything that he spake as being true, because he spake it; and our understanding would be clarified at once by its contact with truth and God. But now we think of God as a remote person: we have no love to him by nature, nor any care about him. It would be the best news some sinners could hear, if there were information given that God was dead; they would rejoice above all things at the thought that

there was no God. The fool always says "no God" in his heart, even when he does not dare say it with his tongue. We all by nature would be glad to be rid of God; it is only when the Spirit of God comes and brings us near to God, and gives us faith in our heavenly Father, that we joy and rejoice in him, and are able to understand his will.

Thus, you see, our entire nature, fallen as it is, operates to the blinding of our eyes, and therefore the opening of the eye of the human understanding towards divine things remains an impossibility to any power short of the divine. I believe there are some brethren whose notion is, that you can open a sinner's blind eye by rhetoric. As well hope to sing a stone into sensibility. They dream that you must enchant man with splendid periods, and then the scales will fall from his eyes. The climax is a marvellous engine, and the peroration is more wonderful still; if these will not convince men, what will? To finish a discourse with a blaze of fireworks, will not that enlighten? Alas, we know well enough that sinners have been dazzled a thousand times by all the pyrotechnics of oratory, and yet have remained as spiritually blind as ever they were. A notion has been held by some that you must argue the truth into men's minds; that if you can put the doctrines of the gospel before them in a clear, logical, demonstrative form they must give way. But, truly, no man's eyes are opened by syllogisms. Reason alone gives no man power to see the light of heaven. The clearest statements and the most simple expositions are equally in vain without grace. I bear witness that I have tried to make the truth "as plain as a pike-staff," as our proverb is, but my hearers have not seen it for all that. The best declaration of truth will not of itself remove birth-blindness and enable men to look unto Jesus. Nor do I believe that even the most earnest gospel appeals, nor the most vehement testimonies to its truth will convince men's understandings. All these things have their place and their use, but they have no power in and of themselves to enlighten the understanding savingly. I bring my blind friend to this elevated spot, and I bid him look upon yonder landscape. "See how the silver river threads its way amid the emerald fields. See how yonder trees make up a shadowy wood; how wisely yonder garden, near at hand, is cultivated to perfection; and how nobly yonder lordly castle rises on yon knoll of matchless beauty." See, he shakes his head; he has no admiration for the scene. I borrow poetical expressions, but still he joins not in my delight. I try plain words and tell him, "There is the garden, and there is the castle, and there is the wood, and there is the river—do you not see them?" "No," he cannot see one of them, and does not know what they are like. What ails the man? Have not I described the landscape well? Have I been faulty in my explanations? Have I not given him my own testimony that I have walked those glades and sailed along that stream? He shakes his head, my words are lost. His eyes alone are to blame. Let us come to this conviction about sinners; for, if not, we shall hammer away and do nothing: let us be assured that there is something the matter with the sinner himself which *we* cannot cure, let us do what we will with him, and yet we cannot get him saved unless it be cured. Let us feel this, because it will drive us away from ourselves; it will lead us to our God, it will drive us to the strong for strength, and teach us to seek for

power beyond our own; and then it is that God will bless us, because then we shall be sure to give all the glory to his name.

But I must leave the case: it is the case of a deep-seated blindness of nature which cannot be touched by human skill.

II. Now, secondly, we shall dwell a little upon THE SPECIALITIES OF THE CURE, not exactly of this man's cure, but of the cure of many whom we have seen; and the first is, *it is usually accomplished by the most simple means.* The man's eyes were opened with a little clay put into them, and then washed out at the pool of Siloam. God blesses very slender things to the conversion of souls. It is very humbling, sometimes, to a preacher who thinks, "Well, I did preach a pretty fair sermon that time," to find God does not care a pin about him or his sermon, and that a stray remark he made in the street which he hardly thought was of any value whatever, was what God has blessed; that when he thought he succeeded best he had done nothing, and when he thought he had succeeded worst then God blessed him. Many a soul has had his eyes opened by an instrumentality which never dreamed of being so useful; and, indeed, the whole way of salvation is in itself extremely simple, so as to be well compared to the clay and spittle which the Saviour used. I do not find many souls converted by bodies of divinity. We have received a great many into the church, but never received one who became converted by a profound theological discussion. We very seldom hear of any great number of conversions under very eloquent preachers,—very seldom indeed. We appreciate eloquence, and have not a word to say against it by itself, but evidently it has no power spiritually to enlighten the understanding, neither does it please God to use the excellency of words for conversion. When Paul laid aside human wisdom and said he would not use the excellency of speech, he only laid aside what would not have been of much service to him. When David put off Saul's armour, and took the sling and the stone, he slew the giant; and giants are not to be conquered to-day any more than they were then by champions arrayed in Saul's armour. We must keep to the simple things, to the plain gospel, plainly preached. The clay and the spittle were not an artistic combination, taste was not charmed by them, or culture gratified, yet by these and a wash in Siloah eyes were opened,—even thus it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

But, secondly, *in every case it is a Divine work.* In this case it was evidently the Lord Jesus who opened the man's eyes literally, and it is always his work by the Holy Spirit spiritually. He gives a man to know spiritual things and to embrace them by faith. No eye is ever opened to see Jesus except by Jesus. The Spirit of God worketh all our good things in us. Do not let us get away from this belief on any account. The exigencies of some men's doctrinal systems require them to ascribe some measure of power to the sinner; but we know that he is dead in sin and altogether without strength. Beloved, alter your system of divinity, but do not disavow the truth which is now before us, for it stands confirmed by our own daily experience, as well as revealed in the Word of God. It is the Spirit that quickeneth and enlighteneth. Blindness of soul yields only to that voice which of old said, "Let there be light."

Next, *this opening of the eyes is often instantaneous*, and when the eye is opened it frequently sees just as perfectly as if it had always been seeing. I saw a few hours ago what I verily believe was the opening of the eyes of one seeking soul. Two enquiring ones came to me in the the vestry; they had been hearing the gospel here for only a short season, but had been impressed by it. They expressed their regret that they were about to remove far away, but they added their gratitude that they had been here at all. I was cheered by their kind thanks, but felt anxious that a more effectual work should be wrought in them, and therefore I asked them, "Have you in very deed believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you saved?" One of them replied, "I have been trying hard to believe." "No," I said, "that will not do. Did you ever tell your father that you tried to believe him?" They admitted that such language would have have been an insult. I then set the gospel very plainly before them in as simple language as I could, but one of them said, "I cannot realise it, I cannot realise that I am saved." Then I went on to say, "God bears testimony to his Son, that whosoever trusts in his Son is saved. Will you make him a liar now, or will you believe his word?" While I thus spoke, one of them started as if astonished, and she startled us all as she cried, "Oh, Sir, I see it all; I am saved. O do bless Jesus for me, for showing me this and saving me; I see it all." The esteemed sister who had brought me these young friends knelt down with them while with all our hearts we blessed and magnified the Lord. One of the two sisters, however, could not see the gospel as the other had done, though I feel sure she will. Did it not seem strange that, both hearing the same words, one should come out into clear light and the other should have to wait in the gloom. The change which comes over the heart when the understanding grasps the gospel is often reflected in the face, and shines there like the light of heaven. Such newly-enlightened souls often exclaim, "Why sir, it is so plain; how is it I have not seen it before now? I understand all I have read in the Bible now, though I cared not for it before. It has all come in a minute, and now I see what I never perceived before." I simply give one instance because it is one amongst thousands which one has seen, in which the eyes have opened instantly. I can only compare the enlightened sinner to a person who has been shut up in a dark prison and has never seen the light, and suddenly his liberator opens a window and the prisoner is staggered and amazed at what he sees when he looks abroad on hill and flood. To the believer, heaven-given sight is so superlative a gift, and what is revealed to him so amazes him, that he scarce knows where he is. Very frequently, when Christ opens the eyes it is done in a moment and done completely in that moment, though in other instances it is a more gradual light; men are at first seen as trees walking, and then by degrees film after film is taken from the spiritual eye.

Now, you must not wonder if light comes so suddenly that it should be quite *a new sensation to the man*, and therefore should surprise him. Do you remember the first breath of spiritual life you ever drew? I think I recollect it still. Do you remember the first sight you ever had of Christ? Oh, you must recollect it. There is fixed in the memories of some of us the first time we saw the sea, and the first time we gazed upon

the Alps, but these were nothing; we felt they were still but pieces of this old world, and we had only seen a little more of what we had seen before: but conversion opens up a new world: it teaches us to peer into the invisible and to see the things not seen of mortal eye. When we receive new eyes, we see a thousand things which utterly astound and at the same time delight us. Do you wonder if young converts get excited? I neither wonder nor blame, I wish we had a little more excitement in our gatherings for worship. Who hears now-a-days the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" or who hears a soul saying, "I have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write?" Let us give plenty of liberty to the work of the Spirit of God, and believe that when he comes men will not always act after the sober rules of decorum, but will break through them, and even be suspected of being drunken, because they speak as men in their ordinary minds are not likely to do. It is a strange and marvellous thing to men when the Spirit of God opens their eyes, and we must not wonder if they scarce know what they say and forget where they are.

One thing is certain, that when the eye is open, *it is a very clear thing to the man himself.* Others may doubt whether his eyes are opened, but he knows they are; about that he has no question. "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." When the Lord in his infinite mercy visits a spirit that has been long shut up in the dark, the change becomes so great, that he does not need to enquire, "Am I changed or not?" but he himself is assured of it by his own consciousness.

Once give the man the eye to see, and he possesses a faculty that is *capable of abundant use.* The man who could see the Pharisees, could by-and-by see Jesus. He who has his eyes opened, can not only see the trees and fields around him, but he can behold the heavens, and the glorious sun: and once give a man spiritual light, he has at once capacity for seeing divine mysteries; he shall see the world to come, and the glories yet to be revealed. Those new-created eyes are those which shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off; he has the faculty for seeing everything which shall be beheld in the day of the revelation of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Oh, what a marvellous work is this! May everyone of us know it personally. I put the question, Do we know it? Have we thus had our eyes opened?

III. I must close with a third point, which is this: THE CONDITION OF THE HEALED MAN.

When his eyes were opened first, *he had strong impressions in favour of the glorious One who had healed him.* He did not know who he was, but he knew he must be something very good; he thought he must be a prophet, and when he came to know him better he felt that he was God, and he fell down and worshipped him. No man has had his eyes opened without feeling intense love to Jesus, aye, and I will add without believing in his deity, without worshipping him as the Son of God. We do not want to be uncharitable, but we have a little common sense left. We never can see how a man can be a Christian who does not believe in Christ, or how a man can be said to believe in Christ who only believes in the smallest part of him—receives his humanity, but rejects his Godhead. There must be a real faith in the Son of God, and he is

blind and dark still who does not fall down like the man in this story and worship the living God, beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and blessing God that he has found both a Prince and a Saviour in the person of the Lord Jesus, who has laid down his life for his people. Oh, I am sure if your eyes are opened, you love Jesus this morning, you feel your heart leap at the very thought of him, your whole soul goes after him, you feel if he has opened your eyes those eyes belong to him and your whole self too.

This man, therefore, *became from that moment a confessor of Christ.* They questioned him, and he did not speak bashfully, and conceal his convictions, but he answered the questions at once. Stephen was the first martyr, but this man was the first confessor assuredly, and before the Pharisees he put it out plainly and plumply, straight to their faces, in simple language. And so, beloved, if the Lord has opened our eyes we shall not hesitate to say so. He has done it, blessed be his name! Our tongue might well be smitten with eternal silence if we were to hesitate to declare what Jesus has done for us. I charge you who have received grace from Christ Jesus to become confessors of the faith, to acknowledge Christ, as you ought to do. Be baptised and united with his people, and then in whatever company you are, however others may speak for him, or against him, take your stand and say, "He hath opened mine eyes, and I bless his name."

Now this man *becomes an advocate* for Christ as well as a confessor; and an able advocate too, for the facts, which were his arguments, baffled his adversaries. They said this and that, but he replied, "Whether it be so or no it is not for me to say, but God has heard this man, therefore this man is not a sinner as you say he is; he has opened mine eyes, therefore I know where he must have come from, he must have come from God." We have been arguing for a long time against infidelity, with arguments which have never achieved anything. I believe that sceptics glean their blunted shafts and shoot them at the shield of truth again; I fear that the Christian pulpit has been the great instructor in infidelity, for we have taught our people arguments which they never would have known if we had not repeated them under the notion of replying to them. But, beloved, you will never meet infidelity except with facts. Say what it is God has done for you, and prove it by your godly lives. Against the holy lives of Christians unbelief has no power. Stand in serried phalanx, each man with his sword of holy living, panoplied in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the assaults of your foes, however desperate their malice, will utterly fail. God grant us, like this man, to learn the art of arguing for Christ by personal testimony.

Well, then, it came to pass, that this man with his eyes opened was *driven out of the synagogue.* Speckled birds are always hunted away

by their fellow birds. One of the worst things that can happen to a man as far as this world is concerned is to know too much. If you will barely keep abreast with the times you may be tolerated, but if you get a little ahead of the age you must expect ill-treatment. Be blind among blind men, it is the very dictate of prudence if you would save your skin. It is a very unsafe thing to have your eyes opened among blind men, for they will not believe in your assertions, and you will be very dogmatical, and, as they cannot see, you have no common ground for argument, and you will fall at once to quarrelling; and if the blind men shall be in the majority, the probabilities are you will have to go out of door or window, and make yourself company elsewhere. When God opens a man's eyes to see spiritual things, straightway others say, "What is this fellow talking about? We do not see what he sees, and if the fellow is very simple he turns round to these blind men, and says, "I will explain to you now." Dear friend, you will lose your pains, for they cannot see. If a man is born blind, you need not talk to him about scarlet and mauve and magenta, he cannot understand you, he does not know anything at all about it. Go on, for it is no use reasoning with him; the only thing you can do with him is to take him where he can get his eyes opened. To argue with him is utterly useless, he has not the faculty. If you knew a person to be devoid of taste you would not quarrel with him because he said sugar tasted like salt: he neither knows what "sweet" means nor what "salt" means, but only uses words without understanding them. And a man who is without grace in his heart does not and cannot know anything about religion. He catches up the phrases, but he knows as much about the truth itself as a botanist knows about botany who has never seen a flower, or as a deaf man knows of music. Do not try to reason with such people, believe that they are incapable of learning from you by reasoning, and go to God's Holy Spirit, with this cry, "Lord, open their eyes! Lord, open their eyes!" Be very patient with them, for you cannot expect blind men to see, and must not be very angry with them if they do not. But be very prayerful for them, and bring the gospel to them in the power of the Holy Spirit, and then who knows but their eyes may be opened. But wonder not if they say you are a "fanatic," an "enthusiast," a "methodist," "Presbyterian," "cant," "hypocrite,"—those are the kind of words which the spiritually blind fling at those who can see. You say you have a faculty which they have not; they, therefore, deny the faculty because they would not like to admit that you have the start of them, and they put you out of the synagogue.

But notice, when this man was put out Jesus Christ found him. It was a blessed loss for him, then, to lose the Pharisees and find his Saviour. O brethren, what a mercy it is when the world does cast us out! I remember an estimable lady of title, who is now in heaven, who, when

she was united to this church was forsaken by all those persons of rank who had formerly associated with her; and I said to her, and she joined in the sentiment, "What a mercy you are rid of them. They might have been a snare to you. Now (I said) you will have no further trouble from them." "Yes;" and she added, "For Christ's sake I could be content to be accounted as the off-scouring of all things." The society of the world never was any benefit to us, and it never will be, and trying to be very respectable and to mingle in elevated society, and all that, is a snare to many Christians. Prize men for their real worth and not for their gilt, and believe those to be the greatest men who are the holiest men, and those to be the best company who keep company with Christ. It is a great blessing to the church when it is persecuted. For the matter of that we might be glad to have back the days of Diocletian again. The church is never purer, on the whole, never more devout, and never increases more rapidly than when she enjoys the bad opinion of society; but when we begin to be thought very excellent people, and our church is honoured and esteemed, and respected, corruption sets in, we get away from Christ and prove again that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. The Lord grant that we may have our eyes so opened that our testimony may bring upon us the charge of singularity, and, then, if put away from the company of those who cannot see the Lord, may we live all the closer to Him, and this shall be a great gain to us.

The Lord bless you, beloved, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—John ix.

Now Ready. Price One Penny.

A SERMON ON A GRAND OLD TEXT,

By C. H. SPURGEON.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A CALL FOR REVIVAL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 18TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Come my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved."—Song of Solomon, vii. 11—13.

I REMEMBER to have heard it said that when a church is in a right condition, all that it wants on the Sabbath day is that the sermon should be like the orders given by a commanding-officer to his troops: it need not be rhetorical or eloquent, it only needs to be clear and plain,—a word of direction for the Lord's servants. If the soldiers be prepared for action, they will not look to be regaled with oratory, but having heard the words of command, they will with all their hearts go about to obey them. Assuredly the church needs instructing, consoling, and edifying, as well as directing; but this morning I feel that I have a word from the Captain of our salvation, addressed first to this particular regiment, and next to those other portions of the Grand Army which are represented here this morning. I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say.

Travelling along our island just now you see everywhere the sickle, or the reaping machine, in full work; harvest whitens the plains; everywhere the loaded wains are bearing home the precious fruits of the earth. My spirit is stirred within me, and my soul is on flame, for I see everywhere a harvest except in the church of Christ. Reapers are busy everywhere except in the fields of our divine Boaz. All fields are ripe, but those of Bethlehem; all barns are filling but those of the Great Husbandman; Christ Jesus has scarce a sheaf ingathered of late; we hear of very few results from the sacred sowing of the word. Here and there the church, like Ruth, gathers an ear, a very precious ear it is true, for who shall estimate the value of a single soul; but we have no wave-sheafs as in the days of Pentecost, or, if we have them, they are few and far between; and as for the harvest home which we have so

long expected, our eyes fail in looking for it in vain. As a church, constituting a part of the Master's field, we have had for years one continued harvest, but still never such an one as has satisfied our spirits, for our idea of our king is such that the largest increase to his church would not content us, we should still feel that our Lord Jesus deserved far more. As *he* has not yet seen of the travail of his soul so as to be satisfied, so neither are we his servants content on his behalf, but we long, and cry, and pray for a larger harvest as his reward for the dread sowings of Gethsemane and Golgotha, in bloody sweat and streams of vital blood.

The time when our churches can operate extensively with the greatest convenience will soon be upon us. We do not usually look for any great things during the summer, when congregations are scattered at the seaside, and workpeople are busy many hours in the day. The summer of nature is the winter of the Church, and the earth's winter is our harvest. These warm days will soon be gone and the long evenings will come, and with them abounding opportunities of doing good. Therefore, it seemed to me to be a seasonable thing to give the rallying cry this morning, and bid our friends remember that the harvest of the church comes on apace. I would urge you all to sharpen your sickles, and with good hope and prayerful confidence prepare for the appointed weeks of our harvest. May God, by his Holy Spirit, inspire you with zeal for the work which awaits you, and give you to walk in fellowship with Jesus in all that you do.

I. We shall, this morning, first of all, call your attention to the fact which is implied in the words of our text, that LOVE IS THE GREAT MOTIVE FOR ACTION IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST.

All through these verses the spouse acts with reference to her beloved. It is for him that she goes forth into the field, for the sake of his company, and the quiet enjoyment of his love, she would lodge in the villages; and all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which are stored within her gates she declares to be laid up for her beloved. Love, then, is the fittest and most powerful motive to holy service. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

This love has about it certain marked peculiarities. It is first *a love which realises the person of the Beloved.* In the text the spouse speaks of "my beloved" as of a real personage, whom she sees, upon whom she leans, and with whom she talks. Christ Jesus is to his church no fiction, no myth, no imaginary hero. Throughout the song both the personages are most real to each other, so real that they both enter into graphic descriptions of each other's beauties, and present us with portraits drawn by the pencil of admiring love. Now, a church will always be strong when the Lord Jesus is real to her; by this, indeed, may her power be estimated. Jesus must be to us no historical personage who was once on earth, but is now dead and powerless; he must be an actual person living still in our midst. Imagine, my brethren, with what enthusiasm the present audience would be stirred if I should retire, and in my place there should come forward the very Christ who was nailed to the cross of Calvary. You would know him by his hands and by his feet, the sacred marks of his passion. Oh, how the sight of him would stir your souls! You would be bowing your heads in

adoration, but grudging the closing of your eyes even for a second in prayer, for you would desire, without a pause, to drink in the blessed vision. And if the crucified One should stand here, and say, "My brethren, my blood-bought ones, for whom I laid down my life, there is yet much to be done to extend my kingdom; there are precious souls, brothers and sisters of yours who know not my name who must be brought in: there are ignorant ones to be taught and sinful ones to be restored;" and suppose he should then point with his hand to one of you, and say, "I send you *there*," and to another, "I send you *there*." Why you would feel at once anointed to the appointed work, and go forth to do it with much earnestness, carefulness and joy; you would be right pleased to receive a commission from those dear honey-dropping lips. My brethren, have you forgotten that you walk by faith, and will you permit it to be thought that sight would have more power over you than faith? I trust you will not have it so. Then, remember, by faith you may realise and ought to realise this morning that Jesus walketh among the golden candlesticks and is in his church now, saying to every one of his people, "Go and serve me! Seek my blood-bought ones! Help my feeble ones! Feed my sheep and my lambs!" I pray you, let your faith this morning sweeten your duties by the knowledge that they arise out of your Beloved's personal commands. Execute his holy commands as if you had received them, as in very deed you have, directly from himself. Let your heart go with mine, while I say,—Jesus, my beloved, though I see thee not, and must be content to behold thee by faith alone, yet my faith shall be more influential than my sight. I know that thou art here, and what thou biddest me do my soul shall perform with all her might, because thou sayest it.

Note next, that *the love here spoken of was well assured of the affection of its Beloved.* Note the verse which precedes our text, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me." A Christian is never strong for service when he does not know whether Christ loves him or not. If that be a question, you have put out the fire by which alone the force can be generated which must work the machinery of your spirit. You must know beyond question that Jesus loved you and gave himself for you, you must feel that he is loving you now, that his heart is looking out through those dear eyes which once wept over Jerusalem, and that the meaning of his loving glance is, "Soul, I love thee, I loved thee so that I gave myself for thee, and I have not repented of the gift. I love thee still as much as I loved thee upon Calvary's bloody tree." It is strength to feel that still "his desire is toward me." Oh, when you feel, "Jesus loves me, Jesus desires me to show my love to him, Jesus at this moment thinks of me and takes a delight in me," this will make you strong as a giant in the cause of your beloved. Between the very jaws of death a man would venture who felt that the love of Christ was set upon him. Love to Jesus is the fountain of courage, the mother of self-denial, and the nurse of constancy. Strive then for a well assured sense of the Saviour's love. Be not content till you possess it, for it will be health to your spirit and marrow to your bones: it will be a girdle of strength to your loins and a chain of honour about your neck.

Observe that *the love of the spouse lived in fellowship with the Well-beloved.* "Come, my beloved, let *us* go, let *us* lodge, let *us* get up, let *us* see, "There will I give thee my loves." True love to Jesus grows stronger and stronger in proportion as it abides in him. We are cold in our love because we live at a distance from him. The angel who dwells in the sun has never to complain of an ice-bound heart; and he who lives in Christ and abides in him will blaze and glow with a warmth of love comparable to that of Christ himself. I do not think that the numbers of a church will have so much to do with the work it accomplishes; that depends more upon the degree of love than upon the length of the church roll. A small church inflamed with ardent affection for the divine Lord will do more for him than a great host eaten up by worldliness. Love burns its way by its own vehement flames. Coals of juniper are soon felt. The Enochs are the men,—they walk with God, and hence they have power over their times. The Johns are the men, they lean on Jesu's bosom, and, when they come forth to tell of what they have seen and heard, they speak with authority as sent by the Most High. The Lord give to us as members of this church to abide in habitual fellowship with Jesus; not to have occasional spasms of delight in God, but one unbroken rest in him. We would not now and then look through the windows of agates and behold the king in his beauty, but we would continue "looking unto Jesus." We would have his praise continually in our mouths, and his love burning like the quenchless altar fire of the temple, for ever within our hearts. This is the one thing needful to promote and sustain a revival in a church. If we have abounding love to Jesus we can prosper under disadvantages, but if we have it not we have lost the great secret of success. Love to Jesus teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight. It sets us side by side with the conquering Immanuel, and makes us share his victories. It yokes us with the strong Son of God, and so makes our infirmities to be but opportunities for the display of his power.

This love leads the church to hold all things in joint possession with Christ. Observe that word, "at *our* gates are all manner of pleasant fruits." Love to Jesus constrains us to make over all that we hold to him, while faith appropriates all that Jesus has to itself. Love will not stand to have divided properties. Such was the love of Jesus, that he gave all that he had to us. He could not bear to have anything, not even his throne itself, that should be altogether to himself. He stripped himself to his last rag to clothe us, and then gave us his breath to be our life, his blood to be our health; and now to-day, if we love him as we should, we are saying:—

> "If I might make some reserve,
> And duty did not call;
> I love my God with zeal so great,
> That I would give Him all."

I like to think, in church matters especially, that we are all Christ's, that if we have any ability, it is Christ's ability—to be laid at his feet; if we have any substance, it is Christ's money—to be used in spreading his church: our Sunday School is Christ's nursery, and the

little ones are Christ's lambs. Our work out of doors in preaching at the corners of the streets is Christ's mission; it is his trumpet, that is blown when the gospel is preached; and every form of agency is not ours—it is Christ's; or if ours, it is only so because it is his. Oh, to have more and more all things common with our Lord, and no longer to speak of mine or thine. Beloved, we are joint heirs with him; all that we have is his, and all that he has is ours. When the church believes and acts upon this, the hour of her success is close at hand.

Consider once more, the love which is the great motive to Christian action is a *love which looks to Jesus for united operation.* It is, "Come, my beloved, let *us* go forth into the field, let *us* get up early to the vineyard." Oh, it is glorious when Christ comes with the preacher, not the servant alone, but the master looking through his servant's eyes, and speaking with his servant's tongue, and pleading with his servant's heart. Oh, it is good teaching in your Sabbath school when Jesus sits there among the boys and girls and speaks to their hearts. It is good, going into lodging-houses or calling at the people's doors to tell them of the Saviour when Jesus knocks as well as you, and the crucified goes with you among the fallen, the infidel and the profane. All is well when the Redeemer leads the way. Be not afraid, beloved, for you go in good company. Who among us will be afraid to do anything or go anywhere if Jesus saith "I will go with you?" Such was the prayer the spouse put up, and doubtless she was led to pray for that which God will grant. Let us pray with her as she prayed. Come, Saviour, come up with us to whatsoever we attempt for thee! If there be any brethren here who are working away for thee in dark places in London, dear Saviour carry the lantern with them, be thou their light! If they are digging for thee, and quarrying amidst granite rocks which refuse to yield to their strokes, come thou Almighty One and wield thy hammer, and straightway the stone shall be broken. Come with us, Lord. This is the fellowship we desire of thee, the fellowship of labour and of soul-winning. We would not only sit at thy feet to learn, but we would take up our cross and follow thee. We would go with thee whithersoever thou goest; we would fight, or labour, or suffer, or live, or die, at thy bidding. Be this the fellowship thou shalt bestow upon us!

II. Secondly. LOVE LEADS US TO GO AFIELD IN THE SERVICE OF JESUS. "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field." A *loving church spontaneously puts herself upon widened service.* She has a large heart towards her Lord, and longs to see him reign over all mankind. She does not wait to hear again and again the Macedonian's cry, "Come over and help us," but she is prompt in mission enterprise. She does not tarry till she is forced by persecution to go abroad everywhere preaching the Word, but she sends forth her champions far and wide. As sure as ever she loves her Lord she asks herself the question, "What more can I do for him?" When she looks over the plot of ground which she has been tilling, she says, "It is not large enough: the harvest I can get out of this will not suffice me for my dear Lord;" and she saith to him, "Let me go to the regions beyond, to break up the fallow ground, and cause the wilderness to blossom." Now, beloved members of this church, do you not

feel some such desire this morning? It is upon my heart that we should be undertaking larger things for Christ. Keep up the old agencies by all manner of means; quicken them, strengthen them; but does not love suggest that as increasing years add increasing indebtedness to Christ, as we are always receiving fresh mercies, so we should make new and larger returns to our best friend? If by us, as a church, nothing new may be ventured, yet cannot each individual have his own plan and branch out afresh? Will not each man say in his heart, "What can I do for Jesus to-day, over and above what I should have done if things had gone on in the ordinary course? Enquire of him you love, and if your hearts are with him, it will not be long before you will discover what he would have you do.

The spouse, when she said, "Let us go forth into the field" *knew that the proposal would please her Lord*; for the nature of Christ is a large and loving one, and, therefore, he would bless the far off ones. His is no narrow heart; his thoughts of love are far reaching, and when the church says, "Let *us* go forth into the field," truly her Lord is not backward to accept the invitation. The spouse does not guess at this, nor does she merely infer it from her Bridegroom's nature, but she has it in express command from his own lips, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." There stand the orders, and when our largest enterprises shall have been fulfilled we shall not have exceeded them. There is no exclusion put upon any tribe or clan, no classes are laid under ban, no individuals are exempted. Therefore, Church of Christ, by the love thou bearest to thy crucified Master, by his wounds and death for thee, and by his living love to thee, seek out the lost and gather together the outcasts. Ye fishers of men, launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. Ye sowers of holy seed, go abroad, and sow the untrodden wastes. Ye consecrated builders, break away from old foundations, and lay fresh groundwork for a larger temple for your God and King. Surely the Spirit of love in a church will suggest this.

Note that *the spouse is evidently prepared for any discomfort that may come as the result of her labour.* She must needs leave the fair palaces of her royal husband and lodge in rustic cottages. Poor lodgings there for Solomon's fair spouse; but what cares she? Any roof which covers her from the evening dew, and shields her from the drops of the night, shall quite suffice her; yea, if *he* be there, the tents of Kedar shall be fair as the curtains of Solomon, for his sake. Brethren and sisters, if you serve the Lord Christ in breaking up fresh ground, you may have to meet difficulties and make sacrifices, but they will be as nothing to you; you will welcome them for his dear sake. Am I stirring no heart now? Has my finger touched no responsive string? I think I feel in my own soul that some of you are responding. Some brother, some sister is here—I know not to whom the prophetic word is coming—who is saying, "Lord, I am thy spouse; I will go forth with thee into the field, and I will lodge with thee in the villages, if there I may but glorify thy name."

Observe, too, *the spouse is quite ready to continue in this uncomfortable service.* She says, "I will *lodge* in the villages," there will she abide awhile, not paying a flying visit, but stopping until the good work is done,

for which her Lord and she went forth. Oh, get ye out, ye Christians, into the distant fields of labour. Many of you—how often have I said it!—sit here Sunday after Sunday, and hear many sermons, when I believe you would be better engaged if you were preaching yourselves, and winning souls for the Redeemer. I have often been glad to miss some of my dearest brethren from our assemblies. Your presence gives me great pleasure, but when I know you have been away, seeking after Christ's blood-bought souls, I have had pleasure in your absence. Go, and the Lord go with you; go, more of you; yes, I say, go, more of you. Your empty seats will be occupied by sinners whom God will save; while you, dear comrades, if you be fighting for my Master somewhere else, will do my Master much more service than you could have done by listening to me. We must not allow a single talent to lie idle; we must not waste an hour of these blessed Sabbaths; we must get us away among the ignorant ones and carry them the light. We must hunt for precious souls. For our master's sake, and in his strength and company we must compass sea and land for his redeemed ones. Only, if any of you go, *do not try to go alone.* Stop until you breathe the prayer, "My beloved, let *us* go." You go in vain when you go not with the Master, but when you have secured his company, then go and welcome, for you "shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you."

Observe how the spouse says, "There will I give thee my loves." As much as to say, if Jesus will thus go with us into active service, then will we reveal to him the love of our hearts. I suppose there may have been times in the Church when a hermit's life would suitably reveal the heart's love to Jesus, but I am certain it is not so now. If there are any here who love contemplation, and would fain spend their whole lives in quiet retirement, I am persuaded that such a course would be injurious to their generation, and to the cause of truth. Of course, there may be exceptions, and if you have no gifts but such as could be serviceable to Christ in solitude, use them in solitude, but from the most of us the times demand activity. So dark is the world we cannot afford to lose a glow-worm's spark. Men are perishing, can we let them perish? Would we suffer a soul to be lost even though it were given to us in exchange to enjoy the highest fellowship with Christ? Behold this day the sheep have gone astray, and the wolves are howling after them; not even to enjoy the great Shepherds's company, can we, the under-shepherds, dare to leave you wanderers to perish. The Church to-day hath her vocation, which is not so much to eat the fat and drink the sweet, as to light her candle and sweep her house, and seek diligently till she find her lost piece of money. Think not that active service prevents fellowship; nay, it is but another form of sitting at his feet, another shape of fellowship quite as true, and because more called for at this era, even more acceptable. I know I have had as great fellowship with Christ in his service as ever I have had in quiet contemplation. When I have met with a poor soul who has rejected the Lord, I have felt my heart breaking over him like the heart of Christ over obstinate Jerusalem; when I have seen the tears flowing from a penitent's eyes who could not as yet find the Saviour, I have felt sympathy with Jesus when he has looked upon the like, and had compassion upon them; and when I

have seen the glow of joy, when the sun of Christ's countenance has shone at last upon the troubled heart, I have entered into the joy of the Lord when he rejoices over one sinner that repenteth. Laziness never yet had communion with Christ. Those who walk with Christ must walk swiftly. Jesus is no idler or loiterer; he is about his father's business, and you must march with quick step if you would keep pace with him. As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, are sluggards to active persons. Those who have much to do have no fellowship with gossips, who drop in to while away the hours with chat. Jesus has no fellowship with you, who care not for souls that are perishing. He is incessantly active, and so must you be if you would know his love. There is a fierce furnace-heat beating upon everything to-day: men are toiling hard to hold their own, and Jesus must not be served by slothful hearts. I am sure that I err not, from his mind, when I say to you, beloved, if you would know the Beloved fully you must get up early, and go afield with him to work with him. Your joy shall be in spending and being spent for him.

III. Thirdly, LOVE LABOURS ALSO AT HOME. Nearer the palace there were vineyards, and the spouse said, "Let us get up early to the vineyards." Note, then, that the Church does her work at home as well as abroad. When she loves her Lord she works with zeal, *she gets up early.* All men in Holy Scripture who loved God much rose early to worship him. We never read of one saint engaged upon sacred service who rose late. Abraham rose early, David rose early, Job rose early, and so did they all. It is put here as the very type and symbol of an earnest, vigorous service of Christ. Dear brethren, there is such a thing you know as keeping the Sunday-school going, and keeping the Tract Society going, and keeping the Evangelists' Society going, and yet nobody is up early, but, after a fashion, everybody is nodding. I know these warm Sunday mornings it is not a very difficult thing for some of you, if you try hard, to go to sleep during a sermon. Well, that is a visible slumber, and is soon got over, but there is an invisible sleep which will come on Sunday afternoon when you are teaching, which is neither so soon discovered nor so easily cured. You are talking, talking, addressing your class, or speaking to your men and women, or whatever else may be your calling, and all the while your soul is nodding. Anybody can wake you up with a push in your side if only your body is sleeping, but when the soul is slumbering it is not so easy. I fear greatly that a large proportion of Christian workers are usually asleep. What a difference there is between what a man teaches when he is asleep and what he teaches when he is awake. You can see it in a minute. I could not describe the difference, but it is apparent in tone and manner, and in every other way. The man may say and do the self-same thing, but still it is a different thing. The children soon perceive it if it is in your class, your hearers soon perceive it if it is in your pulpit. Oh that God would wake up this Church; I do not believe that success so much depends upon what the Church does as upon how she does it. You may take your hammer and go tinkering about and not fasten a tin-tack, but if your arm has muscle in it you will soon be driving the nails home to the very head, and clinching them. May the Lord's love so come upon you all

my brethren, that what you do you may do with all your might, plunging your whole soul into his service, and never sparing force in anything.

Notice that God's people, when they are awake, first *look well to the Church.* "Let us see if the vine flourish." The Church is Christ's vine. Let us take stock of it. Beloved, we ought to be each one of us, in a measure, pastors of the Church. In so large a Church as this the pastoral office cannot be vested in one, or even in twenty. Each must look after his brother, and thus you must be pastors of one another. Watch over one another; pray for one another. How wonderful is the power of prayer. We do not know what blessings come from our prayers. Ten thousand darts might long ago have pierced the Lord's elect were it not that the prayers of the saints are a shield over their heads, defending the sacramental host from harm.

Then the Church *looks after the little ones.* "Let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear." No earnest Church forgets the children of her Sabbath school, and every other agency for the young, will be sure to be well minded. An active church seeks to bring Jesus among the children, to see if the tender grape appear. She pays her visits and performs her services, but ever in his dear company. Helpers in the Sabbath school, and workers for Christ, I salute you. The Lord be with you. The Lord give you to see many tender grapes appearing, and may this Church have joy of you as hundreds shall be converted to God by your instrumentality.

Then the church also *takes notice* of *all enquiries.* "Let us see whether the pomegranates bud forth." If a church be alive, there will be always many to observe where the first tear of repentance is glistening. In this congregation, every Sabbath day, thank God, some persons are pricked in the heart. Watch them, brethren. Those of you who occupy your seats and do not go a-field, can do the cause great service by watching at home. There is no need to leave those seats in order to be useful. Around you there are unconverted persons. Each Sabbath morning and evening there come in here strangers, and it may be the Lord will deal with them, only be you on the alert; speak with them, and try if you can to use the short-handed claymore, that if my longer bladed sword may not have reached them, you who are near at hand may send a deadly wound into the very heart of their sins. O my brethren, words fail me to set before you the ways in which you may show your love to Jesus in the Church itself, but I am certain that there is no need for me to speak. Love herself, will teach you. Mothers somehow bring up their children, though there are no colleges for mothers. Love with its instincts makes them wise, and so will Christians with their love to Jesus become wise to serve. I do believe the less rule and human direction there is in the church, the better. I do not want to say, "Brother, do this, and do that;" if you love Christ, you will know what to do better than anybody else can tell you. You will find your own places; the Lord will lead you to them. I might put a square man into a round hole if I had the placing of you, but love always puts the man into the right position, it tells him what suits his qualification, it puts him to his work, and what is more, it keeps him to it. I

shall measure your love to Jesus, and measure my own, not by the way in which we can talk, or the way in which we can criticize other workers, but by the way in which we shall henceforth labour for the Lord.

IV. The last point is this, that LOVE IN A CHURCH BRINGS FORTH ALL ITS STORES FOR THE BELOVED. The church of God has in herself, through the rich love of her husband, *all manner of pleasant fruits.* This church is a large one, but the same truth will hold good of the smallest church. The Lord never leaves his church without a suitable measure of gifts and graces. If our spiritual nostril and eye could act this morning, we should discern all the fruits of the Paradise of God in this church, and we should smell the sweet savour of all pleasant things; for some brethren here have the apples of faith, others bear the delicious pomegranates of love, and others yield the charming clusters of hope and joy. There are all manner of pleasant fruits among us. One has one, another another, and in some hearts there are many fruits united. A church of God, if well cultivated, is rich in multiform displays of the fruit of the Spirit of God. Some of these fruits are *new*, and oh, how full of savour they are. Our new converts, thank God for them, what a freshness and power there is about their love! Certain mouldy old professors have lost their taste altogether; they have passed beyond the time in which they were sweet; they have got into the sleepy pear state, and are getting rotten. They are chips in the porridge, the taste has gone out of them, if they ever had any. Alas! some have acquired a nauseous flavour, they are very naughty figs indeed. The new fruits may be sharp, and have more pungency than mellowness about them, but for all that they are choice to the Lord Jesus, whose soul desireth the first ripe fruits. I thank God for youthful zeal; it might with advantage have a little more knowledge mingled with it, yet the zeal is good, and the fervour is good. May we never be without new-born souls.

Then there are *old* fruits, the experience of believers who are ripening for heaven, the well-developed confidence which has been tried in a thousand battles, and the faith which has braved a lifetime of difficulties. These old fruits—the deep love of the matron to Christ, the firm assurance of the veteran believer—there is a mellowness about them which the Lord delights in.

All these choice things ought to be *laid up.* Every good thing in a church is meant to be stored up, not to be despised and forgotten; and the point of all is that all in the church ought to be laid up *for our Beloved.* And now is the time when I earnestly ask, in the name of the Lord Jesus, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, yea by each sacred token of the love you bear your Master, that each one of you should bring forth his pleasant fruits, whether they be new or whether

they be old. We do not bring them forth to buy his love, we know better; for though we should give all the substance of our house for love it would be utterly contemned. We do not bring forth these fruits to secure his love for the future; we know it is an everlasting love that never can be taken away from us. We do not bring them forth because we want to commend ourselves. Ah, no, any beauty we have does not lie in the fruits of our storehouses, but in what he has put upon us, and in what his love sees in us. Neither do we bring forth these pleasant fruits to feed on them ourselves. Old experiences are mouldy things; old manna breeds worms and stinks; and as for any fruits which we have brought forth we take no satisfaction in them ourselves. All we have belongs to him and to him alone, and at his feet we would lay the whole. I beseech you, brethren, if you have any love pour it out upon him; if you have any faith exercise it for him; if you have any courage be bold for him; if you have any endurance endure hardness for him; if you have any grace, any virtue, any gift of his Spirit, anything that is lovely and of good repute, use it for him. Now is the day, now is the hour, now his love puts in her claim and serves you with her sacred writs. By the espousals which you have not forgotten, by the covenant which you have oft repeated with him, by the seals of his table, by your burial with him in baptism in days gone by, I beseech you now bring forth all your pleasant things for your Beloved; none for anyone else, but all for him.

I fear we often forget to do all for him. I know if I preach a sermon and have any recollection that such and such a passage might please a learned or wealthy hearer, I have failed to please God. If I have any consideration in my mind as to whether I shall gain esteem for excellence of speech I am weak directly; but if I preach for Jesus only, then whoever finds fault my work is sweet *to him*. And if you pray in the prayer meeting, or teach in the class, or give your contribution to the Lord's work; if you feel you have done it for him, oh, then you know you have done aright because that is the point which sweetens all. I believe that many have stolen up to the offering-box and dropped in what they could give for the Lord's sake, and none have known it, and therefore Christ has accepted it; while others may have given large sums ostentatiously because others of their standing were giving as much, and, therefore, they were not accepted. I want your aid for the College and the Orphanage, but do not give for my sake, but for my Lord's sake. Put what you give into the pierced hand; make that your treasury. Jesus is your Master. No one else has bought you; no one else has died for you; no one else will receive you until his fond embrace at the last; no one else is preparing heaven for you; no one else can say, "Well done good and faithful servant." Serve ye him, then, with both your hands, with all your heart,

with every drop of blood in your veins, and every breath in your lungs. Give him yourself, your whole self, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head, and when you have done that, if he spare you for another half century you will find that you have spent the best life for yourself, though that must not enter into your thoughts.

I have thus spoken to my own dear friends and brethren in Christ, but let me remind those who are not in Christ that nothing of this has anything to do with them. I don't bid *you* do anything for Christ. I cannot. Christ does not want his enemies to work in his vineyard. I do not ask you either to give to Jesus or to work for him? Why should you? Till you love him your services would be a mockery of him. I hold up no standard to enlist under it men whose hearts are disloyal toward our Captain. Ah, no; but if your service be rejected, and you feel grieved at heart that it is so, let me whisper this word in your ear —thy heart may yet be made right. Thou mayest yet come and serve him. Here is his message to thee: "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." There is the point for thee, good friend. Thou must begin with being thyself saved, and then when thou art saved, thou canst serve Christ. Christ will have no man work for him with the view of saving himself; you must first be saved, and then you have not your own salvation to look to. When you have left that with Christ, you can then labour for him. A rich English merchant was requested by Queen Elizabeth to take up certain affairs of hers. "Your Majesty," said he, "I am willing enough, but if I do your bidding my business will be ruined." "Sir," said the Queen, "You attend to my business, and I will attend to yours." Now, sirs, give the business of your soul's salvation up to Christ; let him save you; and when that is done you can make it your business to serve him, and he will be glad of such a servant. The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah liv.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE RESURRECTION CREDIBLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 25TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead"?—Acts xxvi. 8.

CONCERNING the souls of our believing friends who have departed this life we suffer no distress, we feel sure that they are where Jesus is, and behold his glory, according to our Lord's own memorable prayer. We know but very little of the disembodied state, but we know quite enough to rest certain beyond all doubt that—

> "They are supremely blest,
> Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
> And with their Saviour rest."

Our main trouble is about their bodies, which we have committed to the dark and lonesome grave. We cannot reconcile ourselves to the fact that their dear faces are being stripped of all their beauty by the fingers of decay, and that all the insignia of their manhood should be fading into corruption. It seems hard that the hands and feet, and all the goodly fabric of their noble forms, should be dissolved into dust, and broken into an utter ruin. We cannot stand at the grave without tears; even the perfect Man could not restrain his weeping at Lazarus' tomb. It is a sorrowful thought that our friends are dead, nor can we ever regard the grave with love. We cannot say that we take pleasure in the catacomb and the vault. We still regret, and feel it natural to do so, that so dreadful a ban has fallen upon our race as that it should be "appointed unto all men once to die." God sent it as a penalty, and we cannot rejoice in it.

The glorious doctrine of the resurrection is intended to take away this cause of sorrow. We need have no trouble about the body, any more than we have concerning the soul. Faith being exercised upon immortality relieves us of all trembling as to the spirits of the just; and the same faith, if exercised upon resurrection, will with equal certainty efface all hopeless grief with regard to the body; for, though apparently

destroyed, the body will live again—it has not gone to annihilation. That very frame which we lay in the dust shall but sleep there for a while, and, at the trump of the archangel, it shall awaken in superior beauty, clothed with attributes unknown to it while here. The Lord's love to his people is a love towards their entire manhood, he chose them not as disembodied spirits, but as men and women arrayed in flesh and blood. The love of Jesus Christ towards his chosen is not an affection for their better nature merely, but towards that also which we are wont to think their inferior part; for in his book all their members were written, he keepeth all their bones, and the very hairs of their head are all numbered. Did he not assume our perfect manhood? He took into union with his Deity a human soul, but he also assumed a human body; and in that fact he gave us evidence of his affinity to our perfect manhood, to our flesh, and to our blood, as well as to our mind and to our spirit. Moreover, our Redeemer has perfectly ransomed both soul and body. It was not partial redemption which our kinsman effected for us. We know that our Redeemer liveth, not only with respect to our spirit, but with regard to our body; so that though the worm shall devour its skin and flesh, yet shall it rise again because he has redeemed it from the power of death, and ransomed it from the prison of the grave.

The whole manhood of the Christian has already been sanctified. It is not merely that with his spirit he serves his God, but he yields his members to be instruments unto righteousness to the glory of his heavenly father. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost," surely that which has been a temple of the Holy Ghost shall not be ultimately destroyed. It may be taken down, as the tabernacle was in the wilderness, but taken down to be put up again: or, to use another form of the same figure, the tabernacle may go, but only that the temple may follow. "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." My brethren, it would not be a complete victory over sin and Satan, if the Saviour left a part of his people in the grave; it would not look as if he had destroyed all the works of the devil if he only emancipated their spirits. There shall not be a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of any one of Christ's people left in the charnel house at the last. Death shall not have a solitary trophy to show: his prison-house shall be utterly rifled of all the spoil which he has gathered from our humanity. The Lord Jesus in all things shall have the pre-eminence, and even as to our materialism he shall vanquish death and the grave, leading our captivity captive. It is a joy to think that, as Christ has redeemed the entire man, and sanctified the entire man, and will be honoured in the salvation of the entire man, so our complete manhood shall have it in its power to glorify him. The hands with which we sinned shall be lifted in eternal adoration; the eyes which have gazed on evil shall behold the King in his beauty. Not merely shall the mind which now loves the Lord be perpetually knit to him, and the spirit which contemplates him will delight for ever in him, and be in communion with him; but this very body which has been a clog and hindrance to the spirit, and been an arch

rebel against the sovereignty of Christ, shall yield him homage with voice, and hand, and brain, and ear, and eye. We look to the time of resurrection for the accomplishment of our adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.

Now, this being our hope, though we believe and rejoice in it in a measure, we have, nevertheless, to confess that, sometimes, questions suggest themselves, and the evil heart of unbelief cries, "Can it be true? Is it possible?" At such times the question of our text is exceedingly needful, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead"?

This morning, I shall *first* ask you, dear brethren, to *look the difficulty in the face*; and, then, *secondly, we will endeavour to remove the difficulty*,—there is but one way of doing so, and that a very simple one; and then, *thirdly*, we shall have a word or two say to about *our relation to this truth*.

I. First, then, LET US LOOK THIS DIFFICULTY IN THE FACE.

We shall not, for a moment, flinch from the boldest and most plain assertion of our belief in the resurrection, but will let its difficulties appear upon the surface. Attempts have been made at different times by misguided Christians, to tone down or explain away the doctrine of the resurrection and kindred truths, in order to make them more acceptable to sceptical or philosophical minds, but this has never succeeded. No man has ever been convinced of a truth by discovering that those who profess to believe it are half ashamed of it, and adopt the tone of apology. How can a man be convinced by one who does not himself believe, for that, in plain English, is what it comes to. When we modify, qualify, and attenuate our doctrinal statements, we make concessions which will never be reciprocated, and are only received as admissions that we do not believe ourselves what we assert. By this cutting and trimming policy we shear away the locks of our strength, and break our own arm. Nothing of that kind affects me, either now or any time.

We do then really in very truth believe that the very body which is put into the grave will rise again, and we mean this literally, and as we utter it. We are not using the language of metaphor, or talking of a myth; we believe that, in actual fact, the bodies of the dead will rise again from the tomb. We admit, and rejoice in the fact, that there will be a great change in the body of the righteous man; that its materialism will have lost all the grossness and tendency to corruption which now surrounds it; that it will be adapted for higher purposes; for, whereas, it is now only a tenement fit for the soul or the lower intellectual faculties, it will then be adapted for the spirit or the higher part of our nature: we rejoice that though sown in weakness it will be raised in power; though sown in dishonour it will be raised in glory; but we nevertheless know that it will be the same body. The self-same body which is put into the grave shall rise again; there shall be an absolute identity between the body in which we die and the body in which we rise again from the dust.

But, let it be remembered that identity is not the same thing as absolute sameness of substance and continuance of atoms. We do not mention this qualification at all by way of taking off the edge from our

statement, but simply because it is true. We are conscious, as a matter of fact, that we are living in the same bodies which we possessed twenty years ago; yet we are told, and we have no reason to doubt it, that perhaps not one single particle of the matter which constitutes our body now was in it twenty years ago. The changes our physical forms have undergone from infancy to manhood are very great, yet have we the same bodies. Admit the like identity in the resurrection, and it is all we ask. The body in which we die will be the same body in which we were born,—everybody admits that, though it is certainly not the same as in all its particles; nay, every particle may have been exchanged, and yet it will remain the same. So the body in which we rise will be the same body in which we die; it will be greatly changed, but those changes will not be such as to affect its identity. Now, instead of mentioning this statement in order to make the doctrine appear more easy of belief, I assure you that if I saw it taught in Scripture that every single fragment of bone, flesh, muscle, and sinew which we put into the ground would rise again, I should believe it with the same ease as I now accept the doctrine of the identity of the body in the manner just stated. We are not at all wishful to make our beliefs appear philosophical or probable: far from it! We do not ask that men should say, "That can be supported by science." Let the scientific men keep to their own sphere, and we will keep to ours. The doctrine we teach neither assails human science, nor fears it, nor flatters it, nor asks its aid. We go on quite another ground when we use the words of the passage, and say, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" We look for a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. The literal rising again of the human body is our firm belief.

Now this hope is naturally surrounded with many difficulties, because, first of all, in the great mass of the dead decay has taken place. The large majority of dead bodies have rotted and been utterly dissolved, and the larger proportion of all other bodies will probably follow them. When we see bodies that have been petrified, or mummies which have been embalmed, we think that if all bodies were preserved in that way it were easier to believe in their restoration to life; but when we break open some ancient sarcophagus, and find nothing there but a little impalpable brown powder, when we open a grave in the church-yard and find only a few crumbled pieces of bone, and when we think of ancient battle-fields where thousands have fallen, where, notwithstanding, through the lapse of years there remains not a trace of man, since the bones have so completely melted back into earth, and in some cases have been sucked up by the roots and plants, and have passed into other organisations, it certainly does seem a thing incredible that the dead should be raised. Moreover, corpses have been destroyed by quicklime, burned, devoured of beasts, and even eaten by men—how shall these arise? Think how widely diffused are the atoms which once built up living forms. Who knoweth where the atoms may now be which once composed Cyrus, Hannibal, Scipio, or Cæsar? Particles once wedded through a man's life may now be scattered wide as the poles asunder, one atom may be blowing across Sahara and another may be floating in the Pacific. Who knows amidst the revolutions of the elements of

this globe where the essential constituents of any one body may be at this time? Where is the body of Paul, of Festus, who sent him to Rome, or of the emperor who condemned him to die? Who can even guess an answer? What wonder, then, if it seem an incredible thing that all men should rise again.

The difficulty increases when we come to reflect that the doctrine of the resurrection teaches that *all* men will rise again, not a certain portion of the race, not a few thousand persons, but *all* men. It might be easier to believe in an Elijah, who should raise a dead man occasionally, or in a Christ who should call back to life a young man at the gates of Nain, or raise a Lazarus, or say, "*Talitha cumi*," to a little deceased girl; but hard for reason is the doctrine that *all* shall rise, the myriads before the flood, the multitudes of Nineveh and Babylon, the hosts of Persia, and of Media, the millions that followed at the feet of Xerxes, the hosts which marched with Alexander, and all the innumerable millions that fell beneath the Roman sword. Think of the myriads who have passed away in countries like China, swarming with men, and conceive of these throughout six thousand years fattening the soil. Remember those who have perished by shipwreck, plague, earthquake, and, worst of all by bloodshed and war; and remember that all these will rise without exception: not one of woman born shall sleep on for ever, but all the bodies that ever breathed and walked this earth shall live again. "O monstrous miracle," saith one, "it wears the aspect of a thing incredible." Well, we shall not dispute the statement, but give even yet more reason for it.

The wonder increases when we remember in what strange places many of these bodies now may be. For the bodies of some have been left in deep mines where they will never be reached again; they have been carried by the wash and swell of tides into deep caverns of the ancient main; there they lie, far away on the pathless desert where only the vulture's eye can see them, or buried beneath mountains of fallen rock. In fact, where are not man's remains? Who shall point out a spot of earth where the crumbling dust of Adam's sons is not? Blows there a single summer wind down our streets without whirling along particles of what once was man? Is there a single wave that breaks upon any shore which holds not in solution some relic of what was once human? They lie beneath each tree, they enrich the fields, they pollute the brooks, they hide beneath the meadow grass; yet surely from anywhere, from everywhere, the scattered bodies shall return, like Israel from captivity. As certainly as God is God, our dead men shall live, and stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

And, moreover, to make the wonder extraordinary beyond conception, they will rise at once, or perhaps in two great divisions. There is a passage (Rev. xx. 5, 6,) which apparently teaches us that between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked there will be an interval of a thousand years. Many think that the passage intends a spiritual resurrection, but I am unable to think so; assuredly the words must have a literal meaning. Hear them and judge for yourselves. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the

'second death' hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Yet, granted that 'there may be this great interval, yet what a mass will be seen when the righteous rise, a "multitude that no man can number"; an inconceivable company only known to God's enumeration shall suddenly start up from "beds of dust and silent clay." The break of a thousand years shall be as nothing in the sight of God, and shall soon be over, and then shall rise the unjust also. What teeming multitudes! where shall they stand? What plains of earth shall hold them? Shall they not cover all the solid earth even to the mountain-tops? Shall they not need to use the sea itself as a level floor for God's great assize? Before God in a moment shall they stand when the trump of the archangel shall ring out clear and shrill the summons for the last assize! No years shall be needed in order that in God's great workshop bone shall be fitted to its bone, and the wondrous mechanism be refitted; a moment shall suffice to rebuild the ruins of centuries. Curiously wrought as our bodies were at first in the lowest parts of the earth, their restoration from the dead shall be effected in the twinkling of an eye. Man needs time, but God is the creator of time and needs it not. Ages of ages are no more to him than moments, in an instant his greatest marvels are accomplished. Matchless marvel! We marvel not, that to many it seems a thing incredible that God should raise the dead.

And then, bethink you, that this resurrection will not be a mere restoration of what was there, but the resurrection in the case of the saints will involve a remarkable advance upon anything we now observe. We put into the ground a bulb, and it rises as a golden lily; we drop into the mould a seed, and it comes forth an exquisite flower, resplendent with brilliant colours;—these are the same which we put into the earth, the same identically, but oh, how different; even thus, the bodies, which are sown in burial, are so many seeds, and they shall spring up by divine power into outgrowths, surpassing all imagination in beauty. This increases the wonder, for the Lord Jesus not only snatches the prey from between the teeth of the destroyer, but that which had become worm's meat, ashes, dust, he raises in his own sacred image. It is as though a tattered and moth-eaten garment were rent to shreds, and then by a divine word restored to its perfectness, and in addition made whiter than any fuller on earth could make it, and adorned with costly fringes and embroideries unknown to it before, and all this in a moment of time. Let it stand as a world of wonders, marvellous beyond all things: we will not, for a moment, attempt to explain it away, or pare down the angles of the truth.

One of the difficulties of believing it is this, that there are positively no full analogies in nature by which to support it. There are phenomena around us somewhat like it so that we can compare, but I believe that there is no analogy in nature upon which it would be at all fair to found an argument. For instance, some have said that sleep is the analogy of death, and that our awaking is a sort of resurrection. The figure is admirable, but the analogy is very far from perfect, since in sleep there is still life. A continuance of life is manifest to the man himself in his dreams, and to all onlookers who choose to watch the

sleeper, to hear him breathe, or to watch his heart beat. But in death the body has no pulses or other signs of life left in it; it does not even remain entire as the body of the sleeper does. Imagine that the slumberer should be torn limb from limb, pounded in a mortar, and reduced to powder, and that powder mixed up with clay and mould, and then see him awaken at your call, and you would have something worth calling an analogy; but a mere sleep from which a man is startled, while it is an excellent comparison, is far enough from being the counterpart or prophecy of resurrection. More frequently we hear mentioned the development of insects as a striking analogy. The larva is man in his present condition, the chrysalis is a type of man in his death, and the imago or perfect insect is the representation of man in his resurrection. An admirable simile, certainly, but no more, for there is life in the chrysalis; there is organisation, there is, in fact, the entire fly. No observer can mistake the chrysalis for a dead thing; take it up and you shall find everything in it that will come out of it; the perfect creature is evidently dormant there. If you could crush the chrysalis, dry up all its life juices, bruise it into dust, pass it through chemical processes, utterly dissolve it, and then afterwards call it back into a butterfly, you would have seen an analogy of the resurrection; but this is unknown to nature as yet. I find no fault with the picture, it is most instructive and interesting; but to argue from it would be childish to the last degree. Nor is the analogy of the seed much more conclusive. The seed when put into the ground dies, and yet rises again in due season, hence the apostle uses it as the apt type and emblem of death. He tells us that the seed is not quickened except it die. What is death? Death is the resolution of an organisation into its original particles, and so the seed begins to separate into its elements, to fall back from the organisation of life into the inorganic state; but still a life germ always remains, and the crumbling organisation becomes its food from which it builds itself up again. Is it so with dead bodies, of which not even a trace remains? Who shall discover a life germ in the putrid corpse? I shall not say there may not be some essential nucleus which better instructed beings might perceive, but I would demand where in the corrupted body it can be supposed to dwell. Is it in the brain? The brain is among the first things to disappear. The skull is empty and void. Is it in the heart? That also has a very brief duration, far briefer than the bones. Nowhere could a microscope discover any vital principle in bodies disinterred from the sod. Turn up the soil wherein the seed is buried, at anytime you will, and you will find it where you placed it, if indeed it will ever rise from the ground; but such is not the case with the man who has been buried a few hundred years; of him the last relic has probably passed beyond all recognition. The generations to come are not more undiscoverable than those which have gone. Think of those who were buried before the flood, or drowned in that general deluge, where, I ask, have we the smallest remnant of them? Grind your corn of wheat to fine flour, and throw it to the winds, and behold corn fields rising from it, and then you will have a perfect analogy; but as yet I do not think that nature contains a parallel case. The resurrection stands alone; and, concerning it the Lord might well say,

"Behold, I do a new thing in the earth." With the exception of the resurrection of our Lord, and those granted to a few persons by miracle, we have nothing in history that can be brought to bear upon the point; nor need we look there for evidence, we have a far surer ground to go upon. Here, then, is the difficulty, and a notable one it is. Can these dry bones live? Is it a credible thing that the dead should be raised?

II. How are we to meet the demands of the case? We said that in the second place we would REMOVE THE DIFFICULTY. We made no empty boast, the matter is simple. Read the text again with due emphasis, and it is done. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you *that* GOD *should raise the dead*"? It might seem incredible that the dead should be raised, but why should it seem incredible that GOD, the Almighty, the Infinite, should raise the dead? Grant a God, and no difficulties remain. Grant that God is, and that he is omnipotent: grant that he has said the dead shall be raised, and belief is no longer hard but inevitable. Impossibility and incredulity—both vanish in the presence of God. I believe this is the only way in which the difficulties of faith should be met: it is of no use to run to reason for weapons against unbelief, the Word of God is the true defence of faith. It is foolish to build with wood and hay when solid stones may be had. If my heavenly Father makes a promise, or reveals a truth, am I not to believe him till I have asked the philosophers about it? Is God's word only true when finite reason approves of it? After all, is man's judgment the ultimatum, and is God's word only to be taken when we can see for ourselves, and therefore have no need of revelation at all? Far from us be this spirit. Let God be true, and every man a liar. We are not staggered when the wise men mock at us, but we fall back upon "thus saith the Lord." One word from God outweighs for us a library of human lore. To the Christian, God's *ipse dixit* stands in the stead of all reason. Our logic is, "God has said it," and this is our rhetoric too. If God declares that the dead shall be raised, it is not a thing incredible to us. Difficulty is not in the dictionary of the Godhead. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Heap up the difficulties, if you like, make the doctrine more and more hard for reason to compass, so long as it contains no self-evident contradiction and inconsistency, we rejoice in the opportunity to believe great things concerning a Great God.

When Paul uttered our text he was speaking to a Jew, he was addressing Agrippa, one to whom he could say, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest!" It was, therefore, good reasoning to use with Agrippa, to say, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead"? For first, as a Jew, Agrippa had the testimony of Job—"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." He had, also, the testimony of David, who, in the sixteenth Psalm, says, "My flesh also shall rest in hope." He had the testimony of Isaiah in the twenty-sixth chapter and the nineteenth verse, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.

Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." He had the testimony of Daniel in his twelfth chapter, second and third verses, where the prophet says, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." And then again, in Hosea xiii. 14, Agrippa had another testimony where the Lord declares "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." Thus God had plainly promised resurrection in the Old Testament Scriptures, and that fact should be quite enough for Agrippa. If the Lord has said it, it is no longer doubtful.

To us as Christians there has been granted yet fuller evidence. Remember how our Lord has spoken concerning resurrection: with no bated breath has he declared his intention to raise the dead. Remarkable is that passage in John v. 28, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." And so in chapter vi. 40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." The Holy Ghost has spoken the same truth by the apostles. In that precious and most blessed eighth chapter of the Romans, we have a testimony in the eleventh verse, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." I read you just now the passage from the first of Thessalonians, which is very full indeed, where we are bidden not to sorrow as those that are without hope; and you have in the Phillippians the third chapter and twenty-first verse, another proof, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." I scarcely need remind you of that grand chapter of massive argument, Corinthians the fifteenth. Beyond all doubt the testimony of the Holy Ghost is that the dead shall rise; and granted that there is an Almighty God, we find no difficulty in accepting the doctrine and entertaining the blessed hope.

At the same time it may be well to look around us, and note what helps the Lord has appointed for our faith. I am quite certain, dear friends, that there are many wonders in the world which we should not have believed by mere report, if we had not come across them by experience and observation. The electric telegraph, though it be but an invention of man, would have been as hard to believe in a thousand years ago as the resurrection of the dead is now. Who in the days of packhorses would have believed in flashing a message from England to America? When our missionaries in tropical countries have told the natives of the formation of ice, and that persons could walk across frozen water, and of ships that have been surrounded by mountains of

ice in the open sea, the water becoming solid and hard as a rock all around them, the natives have refused to believe such absurd reports. Everything is wonderful till we are used to it, and resurrection owes the incredible portion of its marvel to the fact of our never having come across it in our observation—that is all. After the resurrection we shall regard it as a divine display of power as familiar to us as creation and providence now are. I have no doubt we shall adore and bless God, and wonder at resurrection for ever, but it will be in the same sense in which every devout mind wonders at creation now. We shall grow accustomed to this new work of God when we have entered upon our longer life. We were only born but yesterday, and have seen little as yet. God's works require far more than our few earthly years of observation, and when we have entered into eternity, are out of our minority, and have come of age, that which astounds us now will have become a familiar theme for praise.

Will resurrection be a greater wonder than creation? You believe that God spoke the world out of nothing. He said, "Let it be," and the world was. To create out of nothing is quite as marvellous as to call together scattered particles and refashion them into what they were before. Either work requires omnipotence, but if there be any choice between them, the resurrection is the easier work of the two. If it did not happen so often, the birth of every child into the world would astound us; we should consider a birth to be, as indeed it is, a most transcendent manifestation of divine power. It is only because we know it and see it so commonly that we do not behold the wonder-working hand of God in human births and in our continued existence. The thing, I say, only staggers us because we have not become familiar with it as yet: there are other deeds of God which are quite as marvellous.

Remember, too, that there is one thing which, though you have not seen, you have received on credible evidence, which is a part of historic truth, namely, that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. He is to you the cause of your resurrection, the type of it, the foretaste of it, the guarantee of it. As surely as he rose you shall rise. He proved the resurrection possible by rising, nay, he proved it certain because he is the representative man; and, in rising, he rose for all who are represented by him. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The rising of our Lord from the tomb should for ever sweep away every doubt as to the rising of his people. "For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised," but because he lives, we shall live also.

Remember also, my brethren and sisters, that you who are Christians have already experienced within yourselves as great a work as the resurrection, for you have risen from the dead as to your innermost nature. You were dead in trespasses and sins, and you have been quickened into newness of life. Of course the unconverted here will see nothing in this. The unregenerate man will even ask me what this means, and to him it can be no argument, for it is a matter of experience which one man cannot explain to his fellow. To know it ye must yourselves be born again. But, believers, ye have already passed through a resurrection from the grave of sin, and from the rottenness and corruption of evil passions and impure desires, and this resurrection God has wrought in you by a power equal to that which he

wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. To you the quickening of your spiritual nature is an assured proof that the Lord will also quicken your mortal bodies.

The whole matter is this, that our persuasion of the certainty of the general resurrection rests upon faith in God and his word. It is both idle and needless to look elsewhere. If men will not believe the declaration of God, they must be left to give an account to him of their unbelief. My hearer, if thou art one of God's elect, thou wilt believe thy God, for God gives faith to all his chosen. If thou dost reject the divine testimony, thou givest evidence that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and thou wilt perish in it unless grace prevents. The gospel and the doctrine of the resurrection were opened up to men in all their glory to put a division between the precious and the vile. "He that is of God," saith the apostle, "heareth God's words." True faith is the visible mark of secret election. He that believeth in Christ gives evidence of God's grace towards him, but he that believes not gives sure proof that he has not received the grace of God. "But ye believe not," said Christ, "because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Therefore this truth and other Christian truths are to be held up, maintained, and delivered fully to the whole of mankind to put a division between them, to separate the Israelites from the Egyptians, the seed of the woman from the seed of the serpent. Those whom God has chosen are known by their believing in what God has said; while those who remain unbelieving perish in their sin, condemned by the truth which they wilfully reject.

III. Thus much upon these points. Now let us consider, lastly, OUR RELATION TO THIS TRUTH.

Our first relation to this truth is this: Children of God, comfort one another with these words. You have lost those dear to you;—amend the statement—they have passed into a better land, and the body which remains behind is not lost, but put out to blessed interest. Sorrow ye must, but sorrow not as those that are without hope. I do not know why we always sing dirges at the funerals of the saints, and drape ourselves in black. I would desire, if I might have my way, to be drawn to my grave by white horses, or to be carried on the shoulders of men who would express joy as well as sorrow in their habiliments, for why should we sorrow over those who have gone to glory, and inherited immortality? I like the old Puritan plan of carrying the coffin on the shoulders of the saints, and singing a psalm as they walked to the grave. Why not? What is there, after all, to weep about concerning the glorified? Sound the gladsome trumpet! Let the shrill clarion peal out the joyous note of victory! The conqueror has won the battle; the king has climbed to his throne. "Rejoice," say our brethren from above, "rejoice with us, for we have entered into our rest." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them." If we must keep up the signs of woe, for this is natural, yet let not your hearts be troubled, for that were unspiritual. Bless God evermore that over the pious dead we sing his living promises.

Let us, in the next place, cheer our hearts in prospect of our own departure. We shall soon pass away. My brethren, we too must die; there is no discharge in this war. There is an arrow and there is an archer; the arrow is meant for my heart, and the archer will take deadly aim. There is a place where you shall sleep, perhaps in a lone grave in a foreign land; or, perhaps, in a niche where your bones shall lie side by side with those of your ancestors; but to the dust return you must. Well, let us not repine, it is but for a little, it is but a rest on the way to immortality. Death is a passing incident between this life and the next,—let us meet it not only with equanimity, but with expectation, since it is not death now but resurrection to which we aspire.

Then again: are we expecting a blessed resurrection, let us respect our bodies. Let not our members become instruments of evil, let them not be defiled with sin. The Christian man must neither by gluttony nor drunkenness, nor by acts of uncleanness, in any way whatever defile his body, for our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. "If any man defile that temple of God, him will God destroy." Be ye pure. In your baptism, your bodies were washed with pure water to teach you that henceforth ye must be clean from all defilement. Put away from you every evil thing. Bodies that are to dwell for ever in heaven, should not be subjected to pollution here below.

Lastly, and this is a very solemn thought, the ungodly are to rise again, but it will be to a resurrection of woe. Their bodies sinned and their bodies will be punished. "Fear him," says Christ, "who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." He will cast both of them into a suffering which shall cause perpetually enduring destruction to them; this is terrible indeed. To slumber in the grave would be infinitely preferable to such a resurrection—"the resurrection of damnation," so the Scripture calls it; a rising "to shame and everlasting contempt," so Daniel styles it. That is a dreadful resurrection, indeed; you might be glad to escape from it. Surely it were dreadful enough for your soul to suffer the wrath of God eternally without the body having to be its companion, but so it must be; if body and soul sin, body and soul must suffer, and that for ever. Jeremy Taylor tells us of a certain Acilius Aviola who was seized with an apoplexy, and his friends conceiving him to be dead carried him to his funeral pile, but, when the heat had warmed his body, he awoke to find himself hopelessly encircled with funeral flames. In vain he called for deliverance, he could not be rescued, but passed from torpor into intolerable torment. Such will be the dreadful awakening of every sinful body when it shall be aroused from its slumber in the grave. The body will start up to be judged, condemned, and driven from God's presence into everlasting punishment. May God grant that it may never be your case or mine, but may we believe in Christ Jesus now, and so obtain a resurrection to life eternal. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON, Job. xix. 23—27; 1 Cor. xv. 1—26; 1 Thess. iv. 13—18.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SIMPLE REMEDY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"With his stripes we are healed."—Isaiah liii. 5.

EVER since the fall, healing has been the chief necessity of manhood. There was no physician in Paradise, but outside that blissful enclosure professors of the healing art have been precious as the gold of Ophir. Even in Eden itself there grew the herbs which should in after days yield medicine for the body of man. Before sin came into the world, and disease, which is the consequence of it, God had created plants of potent efficacy to soothe pain, and wrestle with disease. Blessed be his name, while thus mindful of the body, he had not forgotten the direr sicknesses of the soul; but he has raised up for us a plant of renown, yielding a balm far more effectual than that of Gilead. This he had done before the plague of sin had yet infected us. Christ Jesus, the true medicine of the sons of men, was ordained of old to heal the sicknesses of his people.

Everywhere, at this present hour, we meet with some form or other of sickness; no place, however healthful, is free from cases of disease. As for moral disease, it is all around us, and we are thankful to add that the remedy is everywhere within reach. The Beloved Physician has prepared a healing medicine which can be reached by all classes, which is available in every climate, at every hour, under every circumstance, and effectual in every case wherever it is received. Of that medicine we shall speak this morning, praying that we may have God's help in so doing.

It is a great mercy for us who have to preach, as well as for you who have to hear, that the gospel healing is so very simple; our text describes it—"With his stripes we are healed." These six words contain the marrow of the gospel, and yet scarcely one of them contains a second syllable. They are words for plain people, and in them there is no affectation of mystery or straining after the profound. I looked the other day into old Culpepper's Herbal. It contains a marvellous collection of

wonderful remedies. Had this old herbalist's perscriptions been universally followed, there would not long have been any left to prescribe for; the astrological herbalist would soon have extirpated both sickness and mankind. Many of his receipts contain from twelve to twenty different drugs, each one needing to be prepared in a peculiar manner; I think I once counted forty different ingredients in one single draught. Very different are these receipts, with their elaboration of preparation, from the Biblical prescriptions which effectually healed the sick—such as these: "Take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil," or that other one: "Go and wash in Jordan seven times;" or that other: "Take up thy bed and walk." One cannot but admire the simplicity of truth, while falshood conceals her deformities with a thousand trickeries. If you would see Culpepper's Herbal carried out in spiritual things, go and buy a Directory for the carrying on of the Ritualistic services of the Church of England, or the Church of Rome. You shall find there innumerable rules as to when you shall bow, and to what quarter of the heavens you shall look: when you shall stand up, and when you shall kneel: when you shall dress in black, in white, in blue, or in violet: how you shall pray, and what you shall pray, a collect being appointed for to-day, and another for to-morrow. On the other hand, if you would know the true way of having your souls healed, go to the Word of God, and study such a text as this: "With his stripes we are healed." In the one case all is mysterious, in the other all is simple and clear. Quackery cannot live without mystery, show, ceremony, and pretence. But the truth is as plain as a pikestaff, legible as though it were written on the broad heavens, and so simple that a babe may comprehend it. "With his stripes we are healed." I saw in Paris, years ago, a public vendor of quack medicines, and an extraordinary personage he was. He came riding into the market-place with a fine chariot drawn by horses, richly comparisoned, while a trumpet was sounded before him. This mighty healer of all diseases made his appearance clothed in a coat of as many colours as that of Joseph, and on his head was a helmet adorned with variegated plumes. He delivered himself of a jargon which might be French, which might also be Latin, or might be nonsense, for no one in the crowd could understand it. With a little persuasion the natives bought his medicines, persuaded that so great and wise a man could surely cure them. Truly, this is one reason why there is an adoption in the Romish Church of the Latin tongue, and why in many other churches there is an affectation of a theological jargon which nobody can comprehend, and which would not be of any use to them if they did comprehend it; the whole is designed to delude the multitude. To what purpose are fine speeches in the gospel ministry. Sicknesses are not healed by eloquence. It was an ill day in which rhetoric crept into the church of God, and men attempted to make the gospel a subject for oratory. The gospel wants no human eloquence to recommend it. It stands most securely when without a buttress. Like beauty, it is most adorned when unadorned the most. The native charms of the gospel suffice to commend it to those who have spiritual eyes, and those who are blind will not admire it, deck it as we may. I shall, therefore, content myself this morning with declaring the gospel to you in the

plainest possible language, without any attempts at excellency of speech. I know it to be the gospel of God; I know it will save you if you receive it; it has saved me; it has saved thousands more. I shall put it before you in plain, unvarnished language. I beseech you to receive it; and I pray that God's Holy Spirit may lead you so to do.

Coming at once to our text, we observe, first, *that these are sad words:* "With his stripes we are healed"; we remark, secondly, that *these are glad words;* and, then, we shall notice, thirdly, that *these are very suggestive words.*

I. THESE ARE SAD WORDS. They are part of a mournful piece of music, which might be called "the Requiem of the Messiah." Hear ye its solemn notes: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Do you not feel that the song so softly plaintive has touched your heart to pity, and moistened your eye with tears. "With his stripes we are healed." This is not the brine of woe, but yet it is salt with sorrow. The sun is not eclipsed, but it shines through a cloud. No one reads the inner sense of these words without feeling grief of soul. This is caused by the fact, that the words imply the existence of disease, and speak of great suffering connected with the remedy.

I say these are sad words, because *they imply disease.* "With his stripes we are healed." This "we," comprehends within itself all the saints, and hence it is clear that all the saints needed healing. Those who are to-day before the throne of God, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, were once defiled as the lepers who were shut out of the camp of Israel. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David, Elijah, Hezekiah, Daniel,—all these were once sick of the accursed malady of sin. All the excellent of the earth among us now, who have been saved by sovereign grace, were once heirs of wrath even as others; as surely shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin as the rest of mankind. There is a confession here, by implication, of all who are washed in the blood of Jesus, that they needed washing; of all who are healed by his stripes, that they were sore sick with sin. This confession is true, every child of God will join in it, and he that knows himself best will make it with greatest emphasis. We were so diseased, that nothing could have restored us but the precious blood of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is a dread fact that sin has infected the entire family of man. We are all sinful, sinful through and through, corrupt with evil passions and depraved desires. Our fathers were fallen men, and so are we, and so will our children be. The putting of bitter for sweet, and of sweet for bitter, of darkness for light, and light for darkness, is engendered in us all. "Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one."

Oh, mournful, miserable fact—in a fair world, "where every prospect pleases," beneath a glorious sky where stars peer down upon us like the eyes of God, man lives a rebel to his God, a traitor to the truth, an enemy of good, a slave of evil. He who was made to rule the world rules not himself. Fashioned for wisdom, he drivels like a fool;

ordained for immortality, he labours for the wage of sin, which is death. Sin has dimmed his eye, hardened his heart, uncrowned his head, weakened his strength, filled him with putrifying sores, and left him naked to his shame.

The disease of sin is of the most loathsome character. Supposing it possible for every man to have had the leprosy, and yet for no man to have had sin, that would have been no calamity at all compared with that of our becoming sinful. If it could so have happened that we could have been deprived of our most useful faculties, and yet had remained innocent, that would have been a small catastrophe compared with this depraving of our nature by sin. To inoculate the parent stock with evil was the great design of Satan, for he knew that this would work the worst conceivable ill to God's creatures. Hell itself is not more horrible than sin. No vision ghastly and grim can ever be so terrible to the spiritual eye as the hideous, loathsome thing called sin. Remember that this dread evil is in us all We are at this day, every one of us, by nature only fit to be burned up with the abominations of the universe. If we think we are better than that we do not know ourselves. It is a part of the infatuation of evil that its victims pride themselves upon their excellence. Our infernal pride makes us cover our leprous foreheads with the silver veil of self-deception. Like a foul bog covered over with greenest moss, our nature hides its rottenness beneath a film of suppositious righteousness.

And, brethren, while sin is loathsome before God at the present time, it will lead to the most deadly result in due season. There is not a man, or woman among us that can escape the damnation of hell apart from the healing virtue of the Saviour's atoning sacrifice. No, not one. Yon lovely little girl is defiled in heart, albeit that as yet nothing worse than childish folly is discoverable; leave but that little mind to its own devices, and the fair child will become an arch-transgressor. Yonder most amiable youth, although no blasphemous word has ever blackened his lip, and no lustful thought has yet inflamed his eye, must yet be born again, or he may wander into foulest ways; and yonder most moral tradesman, though he has as yet done justice to his fellow men, will perish if he be not saved by the grace of God through Christ Jesus. Sin dwelleth in us, and will be deadly in the case of every one among us, without a solitary exception, unless we accept the remedy which God has provided.

Ah, dear friends, this disease is none the better because we do not feel it. It is all the worse. It is one of the worst symptoms in some diseases, when men become incapable of feeling. It is dreadful when the delirious sick man cries out "I am well enough; I will leave this bed; I will go to my business." Hear how he raves; must we not put him under restraint? The louder his boasts of health the more sad the delirious patient's condition. When ignorance is known and felt it is not dense, but he who knows nothing, and yet fancies that he knows everything, is ignorant indeed.

Sin is also a very painful disease when it is known and felt. When the Spirit of God leads a man to see the sin which is really in himself, then how he changes his note. Oh, children of God, have you forgotten how acutely sin made you smart? Those black days of conviction!—my

soul hath them still in remembrance, remembering the wormwood and the gall. The period of my conviction of sin is burnt into my memory as with a red-hot iron: its wounds are cured, but the scars remain. As Habakkuk has well put it, "When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself." Oh, 'tis a burden, this load of sin, a burden which might crush an angel down to hell. There I stood, and seemed like another staggering Atlas, bearing up a world of sin upon these shoulders, and fearing every moment lest I should be crushed into the abyss and justly lost for ever. Only let a man once feel sin for half-an-hour, really feel its tortures, and I warrant you he would prefer to dwell in a pit of snakes than to live with his sins. Remember that cry of David, "My sin is ever before me;" he speaks as though it haunted him. He shut his eyes but he still saw its hideous shape; he sought his bed, but like a nightmare it weighed upon his breast; he rose, and it rose with him; he tried to shake it off among the haunts of men, in business and in pleasure, but like a blood-sucking vampire it clung to him. Sin was ever before him, as though it were painted on his eye-balls, the glass of his soul's window was stained with it. He sought his closet but could not shut it out, he sat alone but it sat with him; he slept, but it cursed his dreams. His memory it burdened, his imagination it lit up with lurid flame, his judgment it armed with a ten-thonged whip, his expectations it shrouded in midnight gloom. A man needs no worse hell than his own sin, and an awakened conscience. Let this be instead of racks and whips of burning wire. Conscience once aroused will find in sin the worm undying, the unquenchable fire, and the bottomless pit. Though God himself will punish sin, yet it is a wolf which tears its own flesh, a viper which turns its envenomed fang upon itself. Peradventure many of you may reply, "But we do not feel this!" True, because you have contrived for the present to give sedatives to conscience. I pity you because you are not aware of the truth. I see how it is with you. You think your money making, or spending your days pleasantly, or your performance of your daily labour, is all you need consider; but if you were not deceived by sin you would know better; you would understand that you are God's creatures and that God did not make you to live for yourselves. Which among you builds a house and does not intend either to live in it or gain something by the letting of it? And do you think God made you without designing to glorify himself in you? Oh, men and women, did your Creator make you that you might live only for yourselves, and make your bellies your gods? Do you dream that you may miss the end of your being, and not have it required at your hands? Will he suffer you to rob him of your service, and wink at your rebellion, and treat it as if it were nothing? It shall not be so, as ye will find to your cost. Oh, may you be taught now the evil of sin. Spirit of God, it is thine office to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; do thine office now, for none will apply for healing till they feel the smart, none will look to the stripes of Jesus till they feel the wounds of sin. When sin is bitter, Christ is sweet; but only then. When death threatens, then do men fly to Christ for life. No man ever loves

Christ till he loathes himself; no man ever cares for Jesus till he comes to see that out of Jesus he is a lost, ruined, and undone soul. Oh, may God grant that the sorrowful part of these words may ring in your ears till you mourn your grievous sin.

But there is a second sorrow in the verse, and that is sorrow for the *suffering by which we are healed.* "With his stripes we are healed." I find that the word here used is in the singular, and not as the translation would lead you to suppose. I hardly know how to translate the word fully. It is read by some as "weal," "bruise," or "wound," meaning the mark or print of blows on the skin; but Alexander says the word denotes the tumour raised in flesh by scourging. It is elsewhere translated "blueness," "hurt," and "spots," and evidently refers to the black and blue marks of the scourge. The use of a singular noun may have been intended to set forth that our Lord was as it were reduced to a mass of bruising, and was made one great bruise. By the suffering which that condition indicated we are saved.

Our text alludes partly to the sufferings of his body, but much more to the agonies of his soul. The body of our Lord and Saviour was bruised. Scourging under the Jewish law was always moderate; there was a pause made at a point which mercy had appointed. Thirty-nine stripes were all that could be given. But our Lord was not beaten according to the Jewish law; he was scourged by Pilate, and the scourging of the Romans was peculiarly brutal. They stopped not at the forty stripes save one, they smote at random, according to their own will. The Saviour endured a scourging which was intended to be a substitute for death,—"I will scourge him and release him," said Pilate,—but instead of its being a substitute for death it became a prelude to it. Probably most men would prefer to die rather than to be scourged after the Roman fashion, and might be wise in making such a choice. Sinews of oxen were intertwisted with knuckle bones of sheep, and these were armed with small slivers of bone, so that every stroke gashed the flesh deeply, and caused fearful wounds and tearings; as saith the prophet, "the ploughers made deep furrows." Our Saviour's back was ploughed and furrowed deeply in the day of his scourging. Now you may look at the person of Jesus, your substitute and sacrifice, covered with livid bruises by human cruelty, and say, "With his stripes we are healed."

But you must not stop there and think that flesh wounds were all his stripes, for our Lord bore more terrible stripes in his soul. He was smitten in his heart each day of his life. He had to suffer the ills of providence. Being a man he had sympathy with us in all those stripes which are the inheritance of Adam's sons; he felt the stripes of poverty, stripes of weariness, stripes of sickness, stripes of heaviness, stripes of bereavement; above all others, he was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Moreover, he had to run the gauntlet of all mankind. Stripes fell upon our Saviour from all sorts of men, for every man's sin laid a stroke upon his shoulder. When he was here on earth, if he saw men sin, that smote him; if he heard them speak a wrong word, that smote him; having sinned, we have been hardened by sin; but he was pure and perfect, and it was a bruise to him to come into contact with sin. You know how his adversaries called him a drunken man and a

wine-bibber; how they said he had a devil, and was mad. Thus they were all striking him; each man laying on his blow with all his might. Worse than all, he was wounded in the house of his friends. Was any blow equal to that which Judas lay upon those shoulders? And next to that, could anything surpass in pain the blows which Peter gave when he said, "I know not the man!" There was a cruel process in the English navy, in which men were made to run the gauntlet all along the ship, with sailors on each side, each man being bound to give a stroke to the poor victim as he ran along. Our Saviour's life was a running of the gauntlet between his enemies and his friends, who all struck him, one here and another there. By those sorrowful and shameful stripes we this day are healed.

Satan, too, struck at him. I think I see the Arch-fiend ascend from the pit with haste, and, lifting himself upon his dragon wings, come forward to strike the Saviour, daring to inflict upon his soul the accursed temptations of hell. He smote him in the desert, and in the garden, till beneath that smiting great drops of blood crimsoned his face. But this was nothing, compared with the fact that he was smitten of God. Oh, what a word is that! If God were to lay his finger on anyone of us this morning, only his finger, we should be struck with sickness, paralysis, aye, and death. Then think of God smiting! God must smite sin wherever he sees it; it is just that he should do so; it is as much an essential part of God's nature that he should crush sin, as that he should love, for, indeed, it is only love in another form that makes him hate that which is evil. So when he saw our sin laid upon his Son, he smote him with the blows of a cruel One, till beneath that smiting his Son cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"? He was bearing in that moment all the crushing blows of that great sword of vengeance, of which we read in the prophets—"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord."

Put these things all together as best you can, for I lack words with which fitly to describe these bruises from the ills of life; bruises from friends and foes, stripes from Satan, and smitings from God, and surely it is the most sorrowful story that ever was told.

"O king of grief! (a title strange, yet true;
To thee, of all kings, only due.)
O king of wounds! how shall I grieve for thee
Who in all grief outrunnest me?
Shall I weep blood? why, thou hast wept such store,
That all thy body was one sore.
Shall I be scourged, flouted, boxèd, sold?
'Tis but to tell the tale is told;
My God, my God, who dost thou part from me,
Was such a grief as cannot be."

One needs to be a Niobe, a dripping well of tears, to mourn the chief among ten thousand made the chief of sufferers. That the ever blessed One should suffer! That the Lord of life should bleed! The angels worship him, and yet Jehovah smote him! He is so fair, that nothing else is beautiful to any eye that has once gazed upon him, and yet they spit in his face and mar his lovely countenance with

cruel blows of brutal fists! He is all tenderness, but they are all cruelty! He is harmless as a lamb, he never thought nor spoke a thing of wrong to mortal man, but yet they strike him as though he were a fierce beast of prey, fit only to be bruised to death. He is all love, and, when they smite him worst, he doth but pray for them, yet smite they still! No curses drop from those dear lips, but words of pity only, and of sweet intercession, follow each blow, yet still they wound, and buffet, and blaspheme! Oh, grief, far deeper than the sea! Oh, woe immeasurable! They smite him for whom they ought to have gladly died, him for whom the noble army of martyrs counted it all joy to render up their lives. They despitefully entreat him who came on errands of pure mercy and disinterested grace. Oh, cruel whips and cruel hands, and yet more cruel hearts, of wicked men! Surely we should never read such words as these without feeling that they call for sorrow—sorrow, which if mingled with spiritual repentance, will be a fit anointing for his burial, or, at least, a bath in which to wash away the blood stains from his dear, and most pure flesh.

II. Next—and may the Spirit of God help us with fresh power—THESE ARE GLAD WORDS. "With his stripes we are healed." They are glad words, first, because *they speak of healing*. "We are healed." Understand these words, Oh, beloved, of that virtual healing which was given you in the day when Jesus Christ died upon the Cross. In the moment when Christ yielded up the ghost, all his elect might have said, and said with truth, "We are healed;" for, from that moment their sins were put away; a full atonement was made for all the chosen. Christ had laid down his life for his sheep; he had redeemed his saints from among men; the ransom price was fully paid; for sin a complete expiation was made; the redeemed were clear. Let us this morning walk up and down with perfect peace and confidence, for from the day when Jesus died we were perfectly clear before the judgment seat of God. "With his stripes we are healed," or rather "we were healed," for the words are in the past in the original Hebrew. "With his stripes we were healed." My sins, they ceased to be, centuries ago; my debts, my Saviour paid them before I was born, and nailed up the receipted bill to his Cross, and I can see it there. The handwriting of ordinances that was contrary to us, he took it away and nailed it to his Cross. I can see it, and while I read the long list of my sins—oh, how long, what a roll it wanted to contain them,—yet I see at the bottom, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It matters not how long that roll was; the debt is all discharged. I am acquitted before God, and so is every believer in Jesus. Every soul that rests in Jesus was at the time when Jesus died, there and then absolved before the sacred judgment seat. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" is a fit challenge to ring forth from the Cross where atonement was finished.

But, dear friends, there is an actual application of the great expiation to us when by faith we receive it individually, and it is that also which is intended here. To as many as have believed in Jesus, his stripes have given the healing of forgiveness of sin, and, moreover, it has conquered the deadly power of sin. Sin no longer hath dominion over them, for they are not under the law but under grace. Nothing ever

delivers a man from the power of sin like a sight of the suffering Saviour. I have heard of a man who had lived a dissolute life, who could never be reclaimed from it by any means, but at last, when he saw his mother sicken and die from grief at his ways, the thought that she had died because of his sins touched his heart, and made him repent of his ungodliness. If there was such efficacy to cause repentance, in that form of suffering, much more is there when we come to see Jesus die in our stead. Then our heart melts with love to him; then hatred of sin takes possession of the soul; and the reigning power of evil is therefore destroyed. Christ's stripes have healed us of all love of sin. Faith in the Crucified One has healed our eyes; once they were blind, for "when we saw him, there was no beauty that we should desire him." Now, since we have seen his stripes, we see all beauties unite in his adorable person. I know, beloved, if you have put your trust in the sufferings of Jesus, you think him to be the most precious of beings, you see a loveliness in him which all heaven's angels could not rival. The stripes of Immanuel have also healed our hearts. "We hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not," but now our hearts delight in him, and we turn our faces towards him as the flowers look to the sun. We only wish that we could see him face to face. And he has healed our feet, too, for they were prone to evil; note the verse that follows our text, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." A sight of his stripes has brought us back; and, charmed by the disinterested love which suffered in our stead, we follow the great bishop and shepherd of our souls, and desire never again to wander from his commands. From head to foot his stripes have bound up our wounds, and mollified them with ointment. He forgiveth all our iniquities, he healeth all our diseases. Beloved, if you would be cured of any sin, however spreading its infection, fly to Jesus' wounds. This is the only way to be rid of the palsy of fear, the fever of lust, the sore blains of remorse, or the leprosy of iniquity; his stripes are the only specific for transgression.

Men have tried to overcome their passions by the contemplation of death, but they have failed to bury sin in the grave; they have striven to subdue the rage of lust within their nature by meditating upon hell, but that has only rendered the heart hard and callous to love's appeals. He who once believingly beholds the mystery of Christ suffering for him, shakes off the viper of sin into the fire which consumed the great sacrifice. Where falls the blood of the atonement, sin's hand is palsied, its grasp is relaxed, its sceptre falls, it vacates the throne of the heart; and the spirit of grace, and truth, and love, and righteousness, occupies the royal seat.

I may be addressing some this morning who despair of being saved. Behold Christ smarting in your stead, and you will never despair again. If Jesus bore the transgressors' punishment there is every room for hope. Peradventure your disease is love of the world and a fear of man; You dare not become a Christian because men would laugh at you. If you could hear the scourges fall upon the Saviour's back, you would henceforth say, "Did he suffer thus for me? I will never be ashamed of him again," and instead of shunning the fight you would seek out

the thick of the fray. "With his stripes we are healed." It is a universal medicine. There is no disease by which your soul can be afflicted, but an application of the blue bruises of your Lord will take out the deadly virus from your soul. Are you ambitious? This will bring you down. Are you desponding? This will lift you up. Are you hot with passion? This will cool you. Are you chill with indolence? This will stimulate you. The Cross! the Cross! the Cross of Christ! what power dwells in it! Full sure, if even for Satan that Cross had been set up on earth, it would have lifted him from hell to heaven! But it is not for him; it is, however, for the vilest of the sons of men; and there are no sons of men so corrupt that the Cross of Christ cannot purge them of all evil. Bear ye this gospel into Africa, where superstitious sorcery holds men's minds in thraldom, it will uplift before all eyes the charter of Afric's liberty; Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands, liberated from her chains, when she shall see a Crucified Saviour. Bear ye the Cross amongst the Brahmins or among the Soodras of Hindostan, preach the Cross amongst a race of men who boast their wisdom; and they shall become ignorant in their own esteem but truly wise before the Lord, when they shall see the light that streams from Immanuel's wounds. Even Oriental cunning and lasciviousness are thus healed.

Do not tell me that we ought mainly to preach Christ exalted. I will preach my Lord upon the throne and delight therein, but the great remedy for ruined manhood is not Christ in glory, but Christ in shame and death. We know some who select Christ's Second Advent as their one great theme, and we would not silence them; yet do they err. The second coming is a glorious hope for saints, but there is no cure in it for sinners; to them the coming of the Lord is darkness and not light; but Christ smitten for our sins, there is the star which breaks the sinner's midnight. I know if I preached Christ on the throne many proud hearts would have him; but, Oh, sirs, ye must have Christ on the Cross before ye can know him on the throne. Ye must bow before the Crucified, ye must trust a dying Saviour, or else if ye pretend to honour him by the glories which are to come, ye do but belie him, and ye know him not. To the Cross, to the Cross, to the Cross! write that upon the sign-posts of the road to the city of refuge! Fly there, ye guilty ones, as to the only sanctuary for the sinful, for "with his stripes we are healed." There is joy in this.

There is another joy in the text—*joy in the honour which it brings to Christ.* The stripes, let us lament them; the healing, let us rejoice therein; and then, the physician, let us honour him. "With his stripes we are healed." Jesus Christ works real cures. We are healed, effectually healed. We were healed when we first believed, we are healed still. Abiding cure we have, for still to his wounds we fly. An eternal cure have we, for never man was healed by Christ and then relapsed and died. "With his stripes we are healed," by nothing else; by no mixture of something else with those stripes; not by priestcraft, not by sacraments, not by our own prayers, not by our own good works. "With his stripes we are healed,"—healed of all sin of every kind, of sins past, of sins present, and sins to come; we are healed, completely healed of all, and that in a moment; not through long years of waiting and of gradually

growing better, but "With his stripes we are healed," completely healed, even now. Blessed be his name. Now, child of God, if thou wou'dst give glory to God, declare that thou art healed this morning. Be not always saying, "I hope I am saved." The man who says he hopes he is cured does not greatly recommend the physician; but the man who knows he is, he is the man who brings him honour. Let us speak positively: we can do so. Let us speak out in the face of all mankind, and not be ashamed. Let us say, "As surely as we were diseased, so surely are we healed through the stripes of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us give Jesus all glory, let us magnify him to the utmost.

I see now in vision a company of men gathering herbs along the slopes of the Seven Hills of Rome; with mystic rites they cull those ancient plants, whose noxious influence once drugged our fathers into deadly slumbers. They are compounding again the cup of Rome's ancient sorcery, and saying: "Here is the universal medicine! the great Catholic remedy." I see them pouring their Belladonna, Monkshood, and deadly Henbane, into the great pot for ever simmering on the Papal hearth. Think you the nations are to be healed by this accursed amalgam? Will not the end be as in the days of the prophets, when one gathered wild gourds, and they cried out, "there is death in the pot?" Ay, indeed, so it will be, even though Oxford and Canterbury set their seal upon the patent medicine. Come, ye brave sons of protesting fathers! Come and overturn this witches' caldron, and spill it back into the hell for which alone it is fit. Pity that even old Tiber's tawny flood should be poisoned with it, or bear its deadly mixture to that sea across which once sailed the apostolic barque. The wine of Rome's abominations is now imported into this island, and distributed in a thousand towns and villages by your own national clergy, and all classes and conditions of men are being made drunk therewith. Ye lovers of your race, and of your God, stop the traffic, and proclaim around the Popish caldron, "There is no healing there." No healing plants ever grew upon the Seven Hills of Rome, nor are the roots improved in virtue if transplanted to Canterbury, or the city on the Isis. There is one divine remedy, and only one. It is no mixture. Receive ye it and live—"With his stripes we are healed." No sprinkling can wash out sin, no confirmation can confer grace, no masses can propitiate God. Your hope must be in Jesus, Jesus smitten, Jesus bruised, Jesus slain, Jesus the Substitute for sinners. Whosoever believes in him is healed, but all other hopes are a lie from top to bottom. Of sacramentarianism, I will say that its Alpha is a lie, and its Omega is a lie, it is false as the devil who devised it; but Christ, and only Christ, is the true Physician of souls, and his stripes the only remedy. Oh, for a trumpet to sound this through every town of England! through every city of Europe! Oh, to preach this in the Colosseum! or better still from the pulpit of St. Peter's!—"With his stripes we are healed." Away, away ye deceivers, with your mixtures and compounds: away ye proud sons of men with your boastings of what ye feel, and think, and do, and what ye intend and vow. "With his stripes we are healed." A crucified Saviour is the sole and only hope of a sinful world.

III. Now, I said this is a VERY SUGGESTIVE text, but I shall not give you the suggestions, for time has failed me, except to say that whenever a man is healed through the stripes of Jesus, the instincts of his nature should make him say, "I will spend the strength I have, as a healed man, for him who healed me." Every stripe on the back of Christ cries to me, "Thou art not thine own; thou art bought with a price." What say you to this—you who profess to be healed? Will you live to him? Will you not say, "For me to live is Christ. I desire now, having been healed through his precious blood, to spend and be spent in his service." Oh, if you all were brought to this it would be a grand day for London,—if we had a thousand men who would preach nothing but Christ, and live nothing but Christ, what would the world see? A thousand? Nay, give us but a dozen men on fire with the love of Jesus, and if they would preach Christ out and out, and through and through, and nothing else, the world would know a change before long. We should hear again the cry, "The men that turn the world upside down have come hither also." Nothing beneath the sun is so mighty as the gospel. Believe me, there is nothing so wise as Christ, and nothing so potent over human hearts as the Cross. Vain are the dreams of intellect, and the boasts of culture. Give me the Cross and keep your fineries.

You will know this when you come to die, beloved. You will find nothing able to cheer your departing moments but the Saviour on the bloody tree. When the man is panting for existence, and the breath is hard to fetch, and the spirit faces eternity, you want no priest, no dead creed, no gaudy oratory, no sacraments, no dreams; you will demand certainties, verities, divine realities; and where find you them but in the divine Substitute? Here is a rock to put your foot on, here are the rod and the staff of God himself to comfort you. Then nothing will seem more admirable than the simple truth that God became man and suffered in man's stead, and that God has promised that whosoever believeth in his Son shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Beloved, if you know that Jesus has healed you, serve him, by telling others about the healing medicine. Whisper it in the ear of one; tell it in your houses to the twos; preach it, if you can, to the hundreds and thousands; print it in the papers; write it with your pen; spread it through every nook and corner of the land. Tell it to your children; tell it to your servants; leave none around you ignorant of it. Hang it up everywhere in letters of boldest type. "With his stripes we are healed." Oh, sound it! sound it! sound it loud as the trump of doom! and make men's ears to hear it, whether they will or no! The Lord bless you with this healing. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark xv. 1—39; Isaiah liii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LABOURING AND NOT FAINTING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For my name's sake thou hast laboured and hast not fainted."—Rev. ii. 3.

THE Lord Jesus Christ never removes his eyes from his Church. He notes everything that concerns her, observing not merely the life of her members but their soul's health, and not merely their health, but the way in which they spend their spiritual strength. He knows their works, he observes their charity, their patience, their zeal, for his name's sake. Seven times in his words to the churches, he says, "I know thy works." This should make us live with great care, for albeit the whole world is under the eye of God, yet of his Church it is true, "upon one stone there shall be seven eyes." The full perfection of omniscience exerts itself upon the Lord's chosen people. The husbandman has an eye to all his estate, but his chief care is his own family; and, even so, while the Great Husbandman of all creation observes all his works, he chiefly looks upon his own household. "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy."

Our Lord Jesus, it appears from the text and its connection, notices what it is that his church cannot bear, and he is very glad when she cannot endure false doctrine, or unholy living; he would have her never to endure these, but to purge herself from them with all strictness. But he notes also with joy what she can bear,—toilsome labour, abundant self-denial, reproach for his sake, and persecution, and suffering, even unto blood. In this he sees her love made manifest, and his delight is in her. It appears that our Lord especially fixes his eye upon the labours of the church. What is the church allowed to be on earth for, but that she should labour for her Lord? If there were nothing to be done in this world, there would be no reason for her lingering here below. She would be transported to the better land, if there were not great ends to be accomplished by her tarrying here. She is put here because the world wants her, and because God's glory

is to be revealed through her. She is to be salt to a society which else were putrid, light to a people who else would sit in darkness. Consequently a church which does not labour misses the chief end of its being; it is a plant that beareth no flower, a vine branch that yieldeth no cluster.

Christ observes the labour of his church, and he has especial delight in it when it is continuous, so that he can give to her the double commendation of our text, "Thou hast laboured and hast not fainted." Oh! that we might receive this commendation from our Master's lips at the last. May he, whose blood and righteousness are our only hope of salvation, see in us abounding evidences of the grateful love which he so well deserves at our hands. We shall this morning make persevering service our theme.

I. First I would call your attention to the text itself, noticing THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE GOOD here combined. "Thou hast laboured"—there is something positive. "Thou hast not fainted"—there is a negative which helps to make the positive more positively excellent.

"Thou hast laboured." We will not consider the original, but we will take the word of our version. "Thou hast *laboured*." Now, to labour signifies working with the putting forth of much strength: it is work with an emphasis. It means hard work, intense exertion, vigorous action. Men may work, but yet not labour, and I fear there are many who claim to be working men who do not often trouble themselves with anything approaching to "labour." There are also working Christians who do not approach to labouring; yet a lifetime of such work as theirs would not exhaust a butterfly. Now, when a man works for Christ he should work with all his might. Surely we should not offer less love under the gospel, than was required under the law, and you know the law speaketh on this wise,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Surely Jesus Christ deserves all that, and when we labour for him it should not be with the careless indifference of slaves, but with the ardour of lovers, the devotion of enthusiasts. If any master is to be served badly, let it not be our Master who is in heaven: we owe him too much to wish to be eyeservants towards him. If anywhere a dilatory servant may be excused, certainly it cannot be in the service of him who redeemed us with his most precious blood. A church ought, therefore, not merely to be a working church, but a a great deal more; it should be a church working to its highest pitch, a labouring church. If I may use the figure, we ought to employ every particle of our steam power; we should drive the engine at high pressure; we have no force that can be allowed to escape in waste. We should be not simply walking to heaven, but running the heavenly race, and running it with diligence and eagerness.

When a man truly labours it takes a good deal out of him, labouring therefore implies self-denial. In labour theman's strength is brought forth and expended. See how the hot sweat stands upon his brow, how it pours from him as he continues to exert himself. He has to deny himself, for he would like to be at rest. He sees his comrade, perhaps, lounging against yonder pillar, or stretching himself at ease upon the greensward; he cannot do that and labour,—

he knows he cannot; he lays aside his ease and comfort for the sake of what he has to do. So would the church if she were what she should be, she would deny herself and take up the cross of high-pressure service. She would toil without cessation, and give without stint. An energy far beyond anything usual in Christendom would be common in the church if she were in a right state of heart. Alas! I fear the bulk of professors are not earnest enough to preserve their professions from ridicule. I noticed, the other day, a remark which struck me. Speaking of a certain congregation, the writer said he believed there were a hundred persons in it who were worth not less than five thousand pounds a-year each, and then he mentioned the sum that was given for the maintenance of the work of God, and he added, "If any ordinary person who was not a Christian, went in there and heard them sing—

> "And if I might make some reserve,
> And duty did not call,
> I love my God with zeal so great,
> That I would give him all,"—

he would say to himself, "I was at the theatre on Saturday night, and saw a farce, but if I want a screaming one I must come here on a Sunday." Indeed, I thought the remark to be sadly true. When I see how much there is of available strength both in worldly substance, in mental vigour, and in other forms in the church, which is never used, I dare hardly say that any church now upon earth really labours for Christ. A little of your spare strength is given to Jesus, and then ye think ye have done well. He is put off with odds and ends, the cheese parings and the potatoe peelings of the church. I ask you, does he get much more? What are the gifts of most? Do they give as much as would keep the lowest menial in their kitchens? It was not so in early times. Then men were Christians all over and altogether, and served Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst, and Christ without end; but now it is enough if we gloss over life with a little varnish of holy talk and pious profession. Would God these eyes might live to see a church that really laboured, putting forth all its strength with all its might, using all the force in its possession for the propagation of the gospel of the Lord and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

But labour implies not merely the strong effort I have tried to depict, but a continuance of it, for a man might take up a workman's tool and for a few minutes make a mighty show of effort, and yet be no labourer, unless he kept on working till his task was done. If a few minutes sufficed him, and he said "I have had practical experience of what labour is, and I rather think it does not agree with me;" and if, therefore, he should lay down his tool and go back to his gentlemanly ease, he would be no labourer. He merely plays at labour, that is all. So have we known too many whose service for God has been occasional; fits and starts of effort they have, but they are soon over; their spasmodic zeal is to-day so hot as to be well nigh fanatical, and to-morrow it will be succeeded by an indifference far more astounding. If the church is said to labour, it means that she puts forth all her strength as a regular thing. Like the sun and moon she continues in her orbit of duty. She does not flash and foam for a brief interval like a torrent,

but she flows on steadily and continually like a river. She keeps at her life-work; with all her might she continues in well-doing, and is not weary. There is the positive good.

The negative, as I have said, crowns the positive,—"And hast not fainted." Now, there are different degrees of fainting. Some may be said to faint comparatively when they flag in exertion. They drop from running to walking, from diligence to indolence. They did run well; what did hinder them? They flag. Many continue to do as much as ever they did outwardly, yet their heart is not in it, and so they faint. Their service is the same to the eye of man, but not the same to the eye of God. They act as mere officials; their work is done mechanically; they go through the routine, but they put forth no energy, no life power; there is no anointing of the Holy Ghost in them. There is fruit, but it resembles the berries of a sunless summer; it is tasteless, insipid, and all but worthless.

Some flag by growing weak in all they do. They do put forth such force as they have, but they are essentially feeble. They preach their best, but their best is wine mixed with water. They teach in the school, and what they teach is the truth, and they deliver it with some degree of earnestness; but they have lost the power with which to influence the heart; ears they can weary, but consciences they cannot stir. They are vigorously feeble, vehemently weak. They have got away from God, the source of all spiritual strength, and therefore their locks are shorn, and though like Samson they shake themselves, they shake themselves in vain. The power of God has departed from them, and, though they may not know it, Ichabod is written upon their works.

Too many go further than this; they renounce all or a large part of the Christian work they were accustomed to do. Content with the efforts of other days they surrender to the sluggard's vice. They faint, that is, they give up the work altogether; the soldier grounds his arms, the workman puts by his tools; they count their day's work to be done before the day is done, and cry for their wages before the pay day has arrived. It is sad that there should be so many in the church of this kind.

And some go even further than that, for after retiring from labour themselves, they cease to have any care about the Lord's work. They grow indifferent; they even become critical and censorious towards those who are zealously occupied; and whether Christ's kingdom grows or declines appears to be little or nothing to them. They wear the Christian name still, but they have fainted. They are like persons in a swoon who have become unconscious of all around. They want assistance from others, and can give no help in return. They are a draft upon the church's resources, instead of an addition to her strength. For all usefulness they might as well be dead; only as a tax upon the energy of the church can they be said to be alive.

Happy are they who are preserved from fainting in any one of these degrees. God grant especially that we may never come to that last, lest it should be said of us that we had a name to live, and were dead. But, brothers and sisters, members of Christ's church, may this be said of us through a long course of years: "They laboured and fainted not." When our hair is white with the snows of many

winters, may it be said truly by the dear lips of him who intercedes for us in heaven, "Thou hast laboured and hast not fainted." When we lie in our last narrow bed, may this be the encomium which our spirit shall hear before the throne of God, "Thou hast laboured and hast not fainted." May this be such a sentence as an honest affection may dare to write upon our tombs. Have we begun to faint already? If we are yet in our youth let us corn to faint so soon. If we are yet in the prime of our days, let us call shame upon ourselves for fainting ere yet the sun shines. Or, are we beginning to faint now that we are growing grey? Wherefore should we faint now when the day is almost over, and the shadows are drawn out? Brother, call shame upon thyself, if thou wouldst faint in thy last evening hours when glory is at thy door and the crown of immortality is all but upon thy brow. Let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, so that this text may be our own at the last: "Thou hast laboured for my name's sake, and hast not fainted."

II. Now we pass on to a second part of our discourse, and that is, to dwell upon EXCUSES FOR FAINTING. Fainting has become so common in the Church of God that various apologies have been made for it, and they are constantly being repeated; for when a sin is frequent, excuses for it are multiplied until men cease to blush, and think that they have done no ill whatever.

There are some who faint in the work of God because the work itself has proved very tedious to them. When they first undertook it and the novelty was upon it they did not tire, but now the freshness is gone, and they have come into the real wear and tear of it, they do not enjoy it quite so much as they thought they should. They hoped for an office in which the chief labour should be to gather lilies, or lie upon beds of roses. The service of the Crucified is far less romantic, and far more laborious. Dear friends, if any of you think that the road of Christian service is all macadamised and rolled with a steam roller, you have made a very great mistake. There is no royal road to eminence in anything, it is always uphill work and rough climbing; and certainly there is no such road in the service of God. Never was there a truer sentence than that we sung just now.

> "True, 'tis a straight and thorny road,
> And mortal spirits tire and faint."

Friends were debating the other day concerning the work of the ministry, the ease or the labour of it, and I reminded one of them of that saying of Baxter, "God have mercy upon the man who finds the ministry of the gospel to be easy work, for he will have need of all God's mercy indeed when he renders up his account at the last great day." I cannot conceive of a more atrocious offender against humanity and against God than the man who, having souls committed to his trust, finds it an easy thing to take care of them and watch for their salvation. Sirs, the ministry is a matter which wears the brain and strains the heart, and drains out the life of a man if he attends to it as he should. If God were served by any of us as he should be, I question whether we should not grow old before our time through labour and anguish, even as did that great lover of souls, Jesus, the great

Shepherd of the sheep. Soul-winning is a work that might fill an angel's heart,—did fill a Saviour's hands. Any service for God, if it be done at all, should be hard work. If you want to be feather-bed soldiers go and enlist somewhere else, but Christ's soldiers must fight, and they will find the battle rough and stern. We, of the church militant, are engaged in no mimic manœuvres and grand parades; our life is real and earnest; our battle, though not with flesh and blood, is with spiritual wickedness in high places, and it involves hard blows and keen anguish. You must look for real fighting if you become a soldier of Christ, and oh, sir, if the excuse for fainting be that the work is toilsome, that it is too much a drag upon you, why did you begin it? You ought to have known this at the first. You should have counted the cost. But, ah, let me add, the work was not toilsome when your heart was loving, neither would it now be so hard if your soul were right with God. This is but an unworthy excuse. Ardent spirits love difficulties; fervent love delights in making sacrifices; they would not wish to swim for ever in smooth seas of pleasure; they know that manhood's truest glory lies in contending with and overcoming that which is hard. Give to the child the easy task, but let the man have something worth the doing to perform. Instead of shrinking because the work is tedious, we ought to gird up our loins and push on the enterprise with all the greater force.

Another apology is pretty frequently heard. "But I have been so long at it now. I have been a tract distributor, I have been a city missionary, I have been an evangelist, or I have been a Bible woman, or I have been a Sunday-school teacher now twenty or thirty years, and I think it is time to retire." Say you so, my comrades? The sun has been shining now a great many thousand years, but I have not heard that he intends retiring from the business yet. God has given to us fruitful seasons, and I have not heard that he intends to cease to bless our husbandry; every day we drink from the river of his mercy, and we have had no intimation yet that that river has ceased to flow, and that God intends to cut off the supplies. Why, then, should any one of us dream of staying his hand? What is a lifetime at its utmost length for the service of God? Suppose a man could spend seventy clear years in unflagging exertion in the service of his Master, what would it be after all? But now half our time must go in sleep, and in the necessary refreshment of the body; next, a very large proportion must be taken off for the business of the world, and then what is left? Why we can only give our Master a few hours in the week, the most of us, and yet you talk about having served him so long. Dear Master, put thy hand upon our lips next time we would use such words, and never permit us to insult the sovereignty of thy dear love by making such an excuse for our sluggishness.

Other excuses, however, will be sure to come, and amongst them this, that we have been disappointed up till now in the success of what we have attempted. We have sown, but the most of the seed has fallen upon the wayside, or upon the rocks; and where it did spring up, we have not gained anything like a hundred-fold increase. We thought that in our class we should have had all the girls or all the boys converted almost immediately; and when we went into the village to preach, we

concluded everybody would come to hear us, and that hearing us, they would be converted, and a church would be formed speedily. We dreamed that when we visited a district in the crowded city, we should be able, very soon, so to reform the people, that the public houses would grow fewer, and the Sabbath would be better kept, and I do not know what beside: very little of this fair vision has been realised; we have not succeeded as we desired. And what is very perplexing to us is the fact that we know of somebody who has succeeded where we have failed; a person who does not appear to have all the gifts we have, and all the capacities we have, whose sphere was evidently quite as difficult as ours, and yet he has prospered and we have not, and therefore we conclude that we would do well to cease our working. If we were in our right minds, and did not want an excuse for being sluggards, we should not reason thus, but should argue to a conclusion of a diametrically opposite nature. He who has succeeded so well might, perhaps, have an excuse for going home and saying, "Master, my work is done," but he who has done so very little should continue at his work till he can show some sort of result for his efforts. He should say, "I will stick to this till I do succeed, or till I can say, 'If I have not succeeded it was no fault of mine: I did what my Master bade me, I called upon him for help in it, and I went to work in his way with faith in him, and if I have not prospered, I have done what I could.'" I remember hearing a certain young preacher exclaim after he had heard an older divine, who had preached with some power, "There now, I shall never be able to preach again after this, I shall feel quite ashamed to go into the pulpit with my poor sermons!" I could not help remarking that the effect ought to be the other way. If this man had done so well, it only shows what God can enable me to do, and I will go to God and ask him to help me; if this brother is so useful in the church, I will bless God that he is a better man than I am, and if God pleases to give me a gleam of success occasionally, I will thank him even if I am not able to bear so much success as my fellow-servant. We must not give up the war because we have not conquered yet, but fight on till we can seize the victory. Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Another set of excuses I must mention. They are little, pettish, pitiful, proud excuses, but they are very common. Here is one. "I shall leave the work for I am sure I am not appreciated as I ought to be." You do not exactly use these words, but that is your feeling. I am only photographing your thoughts. You began to serve God very enthusiastically, and you thought the minister ought to have said, "I am thankful that God has sent such a very zealous young man into our church": but he has not made any such remark. You have gone on for some time working among the poor, but the good people around you have not been heard to say, "Have you heard of so and so? she is such a remarkably useful woman, quite a godsend among us, an example to us all." You feel hurt that you are not admired, vexed that you are not highly esteemed. Now, I will not waste words in exposing this feeling, but I will at once ask you to look at it, and say if you don't think it is the meanest and most miserable thing you have ever set your eyes upon. Do you mean to give way to such pettishness and silliness?

If so, I have done with you, for you will never do any good in this world. The slave of such a mean feeling is incapable of being free.

"Ah," cries another, "my complaint is more reasonable, for I am discouraged because no one aids me in my work. I should not mind their not appreciating me, but they have not assisted me, though I have needed much help. I have kept on under great pressure, and where I thought I should surely find sympathisers and helpers, I have met with the cold shoulder and unkind remarks." Oh, my brother, my brother, does your life after all depend upon the breath of other men's nostrils? Has it come to this, that you cannot live upon the approbation of your Master unless you gain also the smile of your fellow-servants? Does it mean this, that you will not do your duty because other people are negligent of theirs? It seems to me if others will not aid me I must put my shoulder to the wheel and do the work myself by the help of God. If the toil be unshared the honour will be undivided. To tread the winepress alone makes us more like our Lord. Therefore, let us labour on in the name of the Lord, whose support is far better than the help of kings or princes.

Another says, "I have no patience with these frivolous excuses, but mine is a solid one. I must leave my work, for I am so much opposed in it." Granted that you are opposed, why should you run away? Overcome the opposition, dear brother; the more of it to be overcome, the more grace you want, and the more honour you may gain. Suppose a troop should come against you, is it not said of Gad, "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last"? Would you be crowned without a conflict, and made a victor without fighting? Of one of old it is said, that he broke through a troop and leaped over a wall through his God. Why should not you do the same? "But my wall is so high," say you, "I cannot leap over it." Is it an iron wall or a granite wall? Then, if God tells you to leap, leap right at it. He will either bear you over it, or else its solid substance will dissolve into impalpable vapour and vanish quite away. You only want courage. Go in this thy might, for thou shalt thresh the mountains, and the wind shall winnow them and carry them away.

"But I am so incompetent and feel so weak," says one, "in fact, the further I go the weaker I get!" You are progressing admirably, dear brother, and when you become still weaker you will succeed. Gideon could not win the battle because he had too many soldiers; the faint-hearted had to be sent away, but still there were too many troops remaining, and when the whole army was reduced to three hundred, and they had no weapons but earthen vessels and trumpets, then it was that the Midianites were smitten. When we are weak then are we strong. Oh, brother, renounce this excuse and labour on, fainting not. God keep thee from fainting.

III. Now, for a moment or two, I am going to mention the REAL CAUSES OF FAINTING. The first is an actual decline in spiritual strength. When a working believer suddenly becomes a loitering professor, you may gather from it that his spiritual constitution has grey hairs upon it here and there, though he knows it not. It is not, dear brother, merely that you *do* not do so much, it is that you *are* not so much; you have not the amount of life in you which you once had.

And is not this a sad thing? Ought not this to be an indicator to you of spiritual sickness, and drive you at once to the Good Physician to seek for healing at his hands. There is, if you would look a little into your spirit, I am quite sure of it, a falling off in your love to Jesus. Holy work is no harder, but you do not love Christ so well. You have, in truth, no more enemies than you had, but you have forgotten your best friend. Oh, if you had been in the banqueting house with him, and his banner of love had waved over you, and you had been made to drink of the spiced wine of his pomegranate in sweet communion with his blessed person, you would not have fainted, for he who is on fire with love will burn his way through difficulties. I am afraid too there is coming over your spirit a great deal of deadness to spiritual and eternal things. You are now more moved and actuated by the things that are seen, and less by the things that are unseen. It is a very easy thing for us to get to enjoy the world, and to give our hearts up to its troubles and cares, but it needs the Spirit of God to make us sensitive to the divine touch, so that we feel eternity, so that we know the value of other men's souls, so that we put before us the great day in which actions shall be revealed, so that we estimate life aright as it will weigh in the balances of infinite justice. Oh, to be dead to these spiritual realities in any degree is a dreadful death, and to be callous to holy things is a terrible hardness. May God keep us from spiritual insensibility, and may we be tender and sensitive to the faintest motion of the Holy Spirit.

It is to be feared, also, that those who faint have lost their reliance upon divine power, at least in a degree. The man who labours for God aright never works in his own strength. He who works aright acts because he believes that God works through him; and can a man faint when he feels that? When we fight for God's truth it is not *our* arm but the arm of the Eternal which deals the blow. When we bear testimony to his word it is not we that speak, but God's Spirit speaks through us. Let the man of God go forth to any enterprise and hear the sound of his Master's feet behind him, and he will march to the tune of Miriam's timbrel; but let him go alone and he will moan, and murmur, and pine, and fail, and die. Confidence in God makes us strong, but by turning away from our great unseen helper, we straightway begin to faint.

Moreover, I am afraid that we forget that the Lord requires of us an unselfish dedication to his service, and that we do not serve him at all unless his glory is our chief object. When I hear of a fainting Sunday-school teacher, who gives as a reason for fainting that he does not think the other Sunday-school teachers are as kind to him as they ought to be, I ask him whether his main object was that he should be loved of men, for if he loved his God what would it be to him how his fellow-men regarded him? When I hear a man saying, "I shall give up that post, or that service"—(of course I am not mentioning those who have justifiable reasons, and there are such cases), but when I hear of a man's retiring because he is faint-hearted, I would say to him, "You meet with difficulties;—did you not know you would meet with difficulties? You have gained no honour;—did you not serve for another motive, namely, God's glory? If you looked for ease, and content, and

pleasure, and have not gained them, what wonder? You ought not to have looked for them. Oh, brother, you have made a mistake. You must get into a better state of heart before God can use you. You must feel that you would have the Lord use you just as in his infinite wisdom he sees fit to do. You should be a piece of iron on the Almighty's anvil: to be welded into a sceptre, if he chooses with you to break the potter's vessels; to be beaten into a ploughshare and plunged into the earth, if by you he means to turn up the furrows of the fallow ground; or fashioned into a spear-point, if by you he intends to smite his enemies." Whatever he wishes to make us, that we should desire to be. We know not what it is to serve God fully, until we come to perfect submission to his will.

IV. I have a little medical business to do in closing this sermon. Four sorts of persons are very common among us. There are, first, those who neither labour nor faint; next, those who faint but never labour; then, those who did labour once, but have fainted; and, fourthly, those who labour still, but are ready to faint. To each of these four I desire to administer a little medicine. Let the first come hither. There are some who neither labour nor faint. I do not mean outsiders now; those God shall judge. I mean members of the church. Labour? No. The greatest labour they ever do is to walk from home to the meeting-house to hear a sermon, and some of them are hardly able to keep awake during the time of hearing the discourse. They are slumbering hearers like Eutychus, and it is a great mercy God does not make an example of them as he did of that sleepy brother. We have church members who never labour, and, therefore, never faint. What should they faint about? They have never done enough to come anywhere near an approach to that state of exhaustion. They never draw the gospel coach, but they are delighted to ride on the top of it; they especially prize the box seat if they can get it. They never go into the Lord's vineyard to trim the vines, but they are very fond of eating the clusters, though, indeed, even these they will at times call sour and destitute of the flavour of the older vintages. They do nothing, nothing whatever, and, therefore, they find fault with those who do. I am very thankful that very few of this class are among us, yet there are too many. Now, I would prescribe for them a taste of the gall of bitterness. It might be beneficial to them if they had the flavour of it in their mouths, for I am very much afraid that unless they repent it will be their eternal portion. A church member who brings forth no fruit, what did the Lord say about him? He said, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." How would you like that, you idle church members? Every branch in the true vine that beareth not fruit he taketh away. What say you to this? How like you the look of that threat, you fruitless members? Not you that are sick and whose fruit is patience: God bless you; you are good fruit-bearing branches. Not you who are feeble in health, poor, obscure, and with little gift, who nevertheless do what you can; the Lord accepts and blesses you; he counts your mite a greater gift than the rich man's larger portion; he calls your little word that you are able to speak for Jesus truer service than many an eloquent discourse. But I mean you who could and do not, who should and do

not, who eat the fat and drink the sweet in Zion, and yet let men die and be damned while you take no care of their souls, and do not even give them a tract, or write them a letter to tell them the way to heaven, or give them a warning. Believing that you are saved yourselves, you button yourselves up and are perfectly contented to sneak into heaven alone. A pretty heaven it would be if it were full of selfish spirits like yourselves. Oh, that we may be stirred up to escape from such an unholy spirit. I loathe the very thought of living here merely to get into heaven myself; going to Christ to be washed from my own sins, and for daily mercy, and then never doing a hand's turn towards the building of his temple, but just sitting down and caring for none besides. You idlers need to have a taste of salutary bitterness. May it be kept in your mouths till it is rinsed out with a glass of repentance, and may it lead you to Jesus to ask him to save you from all indolence and selfishness.

The next sort of persons to be dealt with are those who faint but do not labour. "Who are they?" say you. I remember one in the days of Solomon who had to go down a street upon an errand, but did not go. Dear man, he would not venture out, for there was a lion in the way. Now, truth to say, there was no lion that any man could see, but his imagination had invented the bloodthirsty animal. We know persons of the same family who would say, "Oh, do not attempt to do anything that has not been done before, it would be hazardous. Our forefathers were content to have sermons preached down back streets, where nobody could find the meeting-houses; let us keep to our obscurity." Yet men of bolder heart have pushed to the front, and mean to keep there. But hear how these cowards talk. "Do not go down that court; there are Catholics there. Do not think of going to that lodging-house; they are sure to mock at you. Do not introduce religion to such a man, it will be of no use; he will only turn again and rend you; do not cast pearls before such swine." These are excellent wet blankets, and the stock is large. We have some of them in all congregations. What advice shall I give to them but this:—My dear brethren, just stand aside please, get out of the way, and let others come forward and serve God if you do not mean to do it yourselves. If you do not like to be so ignominiously put on one side, I would suggest to you the following medicine. Take every morning a few drops of the essential oil of "try," and you do not know what an effect it would have upon you: powers now dormant would be awakened, and things impossible would be achieved. Add to this a strong draught of the wine of "*must*"; necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me unless I serve my Master; and I think you might be brought back into a tolerably healthy condition, and yet after all labour and not faint.

Our third patient is one who did labour once, but has fainted. If he has fainted because he thinks he has done enough let me prescribe for him a strong potion of the salts of fear. They may be useful to him. He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not worthy of the kingdom. "Remember Lot's wife." Shall I repeat that prescription, for it is a very useful one to those who leave off working for Christ? "Remember Lot's wife." If her fate be recollected perhaps your heart will be stirred up to renewed diligence.

But there are some who labour and are ready to faint. To them I would prescribe the "wines on the lees well refined," the rich promises of God's word, the sweet prospect of an eternal reward. I would recommend them to take the spirit of confidence in large quantities, yea, to be filled with it. Confide in God: he will not suffer you to labour in vain, or spend your strength for nought.

To you, my fellow-soldiers in this Church, I have these words to say: These are not times for fainting, these are not times for idling. All the world is active; the wheels of commerce are revolving at a greater rate than ever; everywhere events march with a giant stride; we have seen what our fathers dreamed not of. Now, if ever, the Church of God ought to be awake. The demands of souls require our utmost diligence. The enemy is active in deceiving; we must be active in instructing and saving. Now, by the precious blood of Christ who bought you, oh, ye believers in Christ, bestir yourselves. If indeed ye be legitimately born from above, if the blood imperial be in your veins, and if ye be soldiers of that great Captain who unto death strove against sin; and if ye expect to wear the white robe and wave the palm of victory, in the name of the eternal and ever-living One, seek ye his Spirit and the divine energy, that ye may labour yet more abundantly and faint not. I am longing to have this church all in working order for the campaign on which we are about to enter. The long evenings are our time of hope. Oh, brethren and sisters, help us that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, between now and next spring, we may have many conversions and a large increase to our numbers. If the whole church should be awakened throughout we might expect far greater blessings than we have ever received before. Oh, Spirit of the living God come upon us, upon pastors, and officers, and members, and upon the whole congregation, and all the glory shall be unto thy name for ever and for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelations ii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WRECKED, BUT NOT RECKLESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, JUNE 9TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"All hope that we should be saved was then taken away."—Acts xxvii. 20.

HERE was a case of extreme peril, in which there seemed to be no possibility whatever of any of the lives of nearly three hundred persons being preserved. In this emergency the apostle Paul resorted to prayer. We may avail ourselves of this privilege at the worst pinch. When things are so black that they cannot be any darker, we may still pray. God is good at a dead lift. Our extremities, as we well know, are always his opportunities. When we can do nothing to help ourselves, let us pray, and we can get help from God in everything. Or, after we have done the little we can do, let us leave all with God and resort to him in prayer. This is one case out of many in which prayer has averted peril, while faith has grappled with fear, and despair has been routed from the heart by a calm dependence on the Lord. Thus Paul was enabled by his supplication to save the lives of all that were in the ship. Do not think, dear brethren, then, that your prayers in time of extremity will prove fruitless. God enable you to pray with faith. Recollect there never was a prayer of faith that failed yet; heaven and earth shall pass away, but this truth shall never cease to be true, that God is the hearer of prayer if we will but believe in him. He that wavereth must not expect to receive the answer; but he that is confident in his God shall never be confounded.

However, I am going to take the text out of its connection; I want to use it for different reasons and purposes. We have frequently known men to be in a condition in which they have said that all hope that they should be saved was taken away. We are going to speak to such to-night. Sometimes I have been *glad to hear that cry*; sometimes I *have deplored*

it; sometimes I *have heartily sympathised with it.* Upon those three phases of the cry we shall speak.

I. Sometimes, as I have said, when we have heard a man say that all hope that he shall be saved has been taken away, we have REJOICED TO HEAR HIM SAY SO. Does that appear to be a cruel statement? It is not meant to be so. Let me explain, and then I hope you will understand it.

Multitudes of persons are sailing in what they think to be the good ship of self-righteousness: they are expecting that they shall get to heaven in her. But she never did carry a soul safely into the fair haven yet, and she never will. Self-righteousness is as rapid a road to ruin as outward sin itself. We may as certainly destroy ourselves by opposing the righteousness of Christ as by transgressing the law of God. Self-righteousness is as much an insult to God as blasphemy, and God will never accept it, neither shall any soul enter heaven by it. Now, this vessel manages to keep on her way against all the good advice of Scripture; for often men have a soft south wind blowing, and things go easy with them, and they believe that through their own doings they shall assuredly find the port of peace. I am glad, therefore, when some terrific tempest overtakes this vessel; and when men's hopes through their own doings and their own feelings are utterly wrecked. I am glad when the old ship parts timber from timber, when she goes aground and breaks to pieces, and men find safety in some other way; for whatever seeming safety they may have to-day will only delude them. It must end in destruction, and it is therefore a thousand mercies when they find it out soon enough to get another and a better hope of being saved rather than this, which will certainly deceive them. I recollect very well when that terrific Euroclydon blew on my vessel. It was as good a vessel as any of you have, although I would be bound to say each of you would vindicate your own. Sails wanted mending, and here and there she wanted a little touch of paint, but for all that she was sea-worthy and fit to be registered "A.1." at Lloyd's, and entered in the first class, at least so I thought. And I recollect when the storm blew over her, and she went to pieces. I bless God that she went to pieces altogether, for I should have been kept on board to this very minute if I had not been washed off. I tried to cling to it to the very last plank, but I was obliged to give it up and look somewhere else for help and safety. Now, it will happen sometimes that when God is dealing with a self-righteous person who is delighting himself with the thought that he is all right, that he is not a great sinner, that he is a religious person, that he takes the sacraments, that he says his prayers, that he is as good as most people, perhaps rather better; and that if he does not go to heaven he wonders who will—I say it will happen to such a man, if God loves him (if he does not care about

him he will let him go on in his own way till he is destroyed, but if he has set his eternal love on him it will so happen)—that a storm will come, perhaps on a sudden, just as the tempest did to Paul's vessel, and twist him right round, and make his gallant vessel in the storm to be like a thing that has lost its mind and will not obey the rudder, and cannot be quieted and controlled. Oh, we have seen them sometimes when they have woke up on a sudden and said, "I never knew this; I could not have believed it! I find myself to be a sinful creature, lost and undone, and up to this moment I really thought I was as right as could be and almost fit for heaven, and quite sure of it." A terrible awakening it has been to some. They have been bewildered, they have almost lost their reason for a time, when they have seen that the law of God is spiritual; that it condemns us for sins of thought as well as sins of action; that it never was meant to justify us and cannot do so. By it comes the knowledge of sin and nothing more. When a man has found out that his heart is evil, noxious, deceitful; that in it there are enmities, murders, filthinesses of all sorts; that it is a nest of unclean birds, a den of ravenous beasts—when he has found all that out he says to himself, "If this be true, where am I; what can I do; whither can I look?" and he drifts before the pitiless storm and the horrible tempest, all hope of being saved beginning to fail him. Yet it is really wonderful how self-righteous persons will do their best to preserve their self-righteousness as long as they can. We have seen them pull in the boat like these mariners. They had got a boat behind the vessel. So there are some who have not only good works enough, but a few to spare. They have had a little righteousness over and above what they ordinarily required, that they could boast and rejoice in as a kind of security against accident or misadventure. They have hauled this in very soon under stress of weather, and got the boat on deck for fear of losing it altogether; and then they have set to work right mightily to run under the lee, if they could, of some favourable shore, as Paul's mariners did. "If we cannot be saved by good works," they say, "we will get under the lee of some church and get ceremonies to help us out—baptism, confirmation, the Lord's supper—we will just get into a snug place there so as to escape the storm." Or else they have thought, "Well, we will make a profession of religion, join with some sort of Christian people, pass through their rites and take their sacraments, and then, perhaps, our vessel need not go down after all; for, good as we are, with just a little shelter of profession of religion, we shall be able to weather the tempest." And when the hurricane has blown them out to sea, and they have found that there is no defence for a soul in all the rites and rituals, the ordinances and observances of the churches; that even the rites which God ordains for a testimony have no atoning efficacy; that only the precious blood can cleanse away sin, and even

that must be applied through the Holy Ghost by faith to give the conscience peace;—alas! poor souls, their hope of being saved has become more slender than before. But they will take to undergird the ship, like these sailors did; they passed hawsers right round the vessel. So people try to gird their self-righteousness together; pray more, read the Bible more, go to a place of worship oftener—by any means they will endeavour to keep together the timbers that the storm had begun to loosen. Oh, I recollect well how I went to a place of worship three times always on the Sunday, thinking that surely I should get some good by it. When I woke in the morning I began to read religious books; I would have done anything and everything if I might have found peace through my own doings and feelings. But the storm blew too severely; the vessel could not be preserved even by such appliances as these. And then you will notice that Paul's sailors set to work cutting down all that might hamper them; they took away the sails, and masts, and every superfluous thing, for the wind was strong. Men convinced of sin do the like. "Oh yes," they cry, "we cannot boast any longer; we must confess we are sinners; we acknowledge we have transgressed in some respects, but, Lord, accept our confessions; receive them, and in thine infinite mercy put away our sin, because we have confessed it, because we have repented of it." They have given up a good deal, you see; but they still cling to the old ship as long as they can. She must go to pieces, or you cannot get them out of her; so the Lord sends the wind, and the storm again breaks over them, gives them no rest or respite; every timber creaks and the old crazy thing is ready to go to pieces. They go to the word of God for comfort, but, like the mariners in Paul's story, they get no food: they cannot find anything that can stay their souls, for there are no promises in God's word for people that are self-righteous; there are no consolations in the whole Bible for those who can save themselves. Plenty of good words for sinners, and good words for those that are righteous in the righteousness of Christ; but for your good people, your Pharisees, it is all thunder and lightning from Genesis to Revelation—not a word of comfort, but all storms and hurricanes for them; and it is a great mercy when they feel that too, and get battered and dashed till every timber is shivered, and then they give it up. We find that the sailors on board the vessel with Paul had not only been unable to get anything to eat for a long time, but they laboured hard; they tried to pump the vessel. They had been cutting the masts away, and reefing the sails, and doing everything necessary in the storm; they must have been cold and wet, and altogether in confusion. Meanwhile, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appeared. They had no compass as we have now-a-days; they could not tell where they were; they were all in the dark: and that is just the condition of a self-righteous soul when the Spirit of God blows with his rough north wind

upon it, and it comes to see that "By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified." It is an awful condition to be in, in some respects; it is a most blessed one in others. Mark this, dear hearers, I desire nothing for you unconverted persons so much as to see you thoroughly convinced that there is nothing that you can do which can save you; that there is no merit whatever in anything that you can do or feel; that you are lost, utterly and helplessly lost, apart from the interposition of Christ; that *he* can save you, but that you cannot save yourselves, nor help him to save you. From top to bottom, he must be alone your Saviour. I do not want to stir you unconverted persons to activity at first; the first thing is to slay you. After that God must make you active. You must lie dead at Christ's feet, and then he will make you alive; you must confess that you are nothing, and then he will be everything to you; you are simply to be the emptiness, and he will come and fill you. I know you will cry, "Well, I would give up all trust in myself, but I do want to feel deep convictions." Yes, the fact is, that is only another way of trying to bring something to Christ. "But I must feel," saith one. Yes, you shall feel enough if you come to Christ first; but he does not want you to bring any feelings to him. "But my heart is so hard," says one. Do you expect to soften it yourself? "But I feel so unfit." Do you know that the only fitness you have got is the fitness of being unfit? "Oh, but I am so utterly unworthy." Do you think he came to save the worthy? Do you ever expect to have any worthiness in yourself? Did not Christ die to save "the ungodly"? Is it not written that he came into the world to save "sinners"? Now "the ungodly" and "sinners"—these are two terms in which I cannot see anything good, if I look them through and through with a microscope. It is bad, altogether bad—"ungodly" and "sinners"—yet these are the sort of people Christ came to save. Oh, that you had grace to put yourself down in that number! It is your badness, not your goodness, that draws Christ to you as a Saviour. You had not any goodness, and therefore that could not bring him from heaven: it was because you were vile that he died for you to make you clean; it was because you were lost that he came to save you, that you might be lost no longer. I tell thee, sinner, thy righteousness will be thy ruin; but thy sin will never ruin thee if thou wilt come and lay it upon Christ by the simple act of dependence upon him. Oh, for such a storm as would that vessel wreck which is sailing under the flag of self-righteousness, that all hope of being so saved might be taken away from you.

Now, in doctrine and theory, my hearers, at least my regular hearers, all believe this; but for all that, it will have to become a matter of experience to you, or you will never be saved. It is one thing to say, "I know I must be empty before Christ can fill me:" it is a different

thing to be empty. The stripping room is a place we do not like to go to; but Christ will never robe us till he strips us. We do not like the lancet that cuts out the proud flesh, but our good Physician will never film our soul's sores: he will cut out all that is bad, and then will he make sound work of it. We must be levelled,—brought down to the condition of being utterly undone; or, otherwise, we shall never have the hand of Christ to come and lift us up into the condition of being saved by him. Thus much upon the first phase. There are times when we like to hear this cry.

II. But we have heard this self-same statement at other times, when we have GREATLY DEPLORED IT. "All hope that we should be saved was taken away from us." I have heard some such lamentation as this from men who had no self-righteousness certainly, but who had fallen into despair. They had perhaps committed some very gross act of sin. Perhaps they had been guilty of stifling conscience, or, possibly, they had grown careless while hearing the word, and they had gradually wrought themselves into the belief that they must be lost. I meet with many —not so very many, but still with many—whose prevalent thought with regard to religion is, "All hope that I shall ever be saved is taken away from me!" My dear friend, are you here to-night? I should like to take you by the hand and speak very familiarly with you, for I am very very sorry, to hear you talk so. And I am sorry for these reasons. First, I am afraid that you will go and do something very wrong; for when a man gives himself up in despair, he is like the sere wood that is ready for the fire. "Because there is no hope," says the man, "I do not care what I do. As the old proverb has it, 'As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.' I shall be damned anyhow, and I may as well have my full swing of sin before I go to hell." Ah, despair has been employed by Satan to lead many men into desperate crimes which they would never have thought of if they had had a hope left! And, therefore, I am very much concerned about many of you that despair; for I do not know what you may do. Some have taken their own lives; some have committed gross acts of crime. They have thought themselves useless, and they have flung themselves away. Do not believe what Satan is telling you. There is hope. The hope that you may be saved is not altogether gone—nay, I will tell you the very reverse before I have done.

I am also exceedingly sorry that you should think as you do, because I fear that now you are very likely to leave off hearing the gospel. I have met with some who said that they would never go any more to the house of God because it was no good. They had been a great many years, and seen a great many converted, but it had never touched them, and therefore it was no use; they were only adding to their responsibilities and they should never participate in grace. I remember

one person whose case I cannot think of without deep sorrow. I think I said one Sunday that there were some here who had heard me for many many years, and if they never meant to be converted or turn to God, I almost wished they would make room for somebody else who would. And there was one who heard that who has never come again and I do not think he ever will. The word of rebuke, that was only meant to startle the conscience, awakened an obstinacy within the soul. Oh, I hope it won't be so with any of you. I hope you will never say "It is no use, and, therefore, I will not come." A dear sister told me this afternoon a sweet instance of how useful it may become to persevere in hearing the word. She says she had prayed a long time for her landlord, who was an old man and very deaf, and not likely to get good by coming here. She had lent him the sermons, and he had often read them with great attention, and it pleased God suddenly to give him his hearing, so that he came here and heard one sermon, and found the Saviour, and went home to his bed and died. One sermon saved his soul, so that he could rejoice in Christ. Don't give up hearing, I pray you. I would sooner you came here and went to sleep, than that you should not come at all, for perhaps when you woke up a saving word might get in somehow or other: God might put it in, and it might be blessed to your soul. Nay, don't say, "There is no hope," for, possibly—and this would be almost as bad—if you say, "There is no hope," you will keep on coming out of custom, but you won't listen with any attention, because you will feel "It is no good." I have heard of a boy who was noticed to lean forward to catch every word of the preacher; and his mother said to him, "William, what makes you so very attentive?" "Because," said the boy, "our minister said that if there was a sentence in the sermon that was likely to do us good Satan would try so that we should not hear it, and therefore I want to hear all that is said in the hope that God may bless me." I do believe, if you were to hear like that, you would get good one of these days. At any rate, if God does not mean me to speak to you, I should be very glad if he would do it by somebody else so that you may get a blessing. But really you must not, you must never give way to that feeling that there is no hope. And I shall tell you why. First, it is quite contrary to Scripture. Do you find the passage there that says there is no hope for you? You say you think God has determined to cast you away. Where did you find that out? Did you read it anywhere within the pages of that book? I know you never have read the secret decrees of God. No one has;—not even Gabriel can pry between the folded leaves. Do not oppose Scripture; don't go in the teeth of it, for the Scripture saith, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Why do you say he will cast you out. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Why do you say he cannot save you? He says, "Come

unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you not labour? Are you not a labouring man? Are you never heavy laden? Have you no trouble, nothing that depresses you? Well then, if the description suits you, he bids you come to him, and he says, "I will give you rest." Do you not believe him? Do you think the Scriptures must all be untrue and your despairing notion must be the only fact?

Nay; dear friend, you need not tantalize yourself with any such idea, because it is opposed to all fact. There are many here present who were sinners and seekers like you now are, and they have found peace. Now if they have been delivered out of all their distresses, why should not you? You say, "But I have sinned too much." I could find somebody that has sinned more, I daresay; and if I could not, even then you might venture on the promise, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Do not despair, I pray you, for that is to insult the great Father who always receives the prodigals that come back to him. Say that he cannot save you? why you deny his omnipotence! Say that he will not save you? why you distrust his mercy! Nothing makes him happier than to forgive sinners. It is a great part of the joy of God in that portion of his nature which he reveals to us, to display his grace towards the undeserving sons of men. Moreover, you grieve Jesus Christ when you say there is no hope that you shall be saved. Do you think his blood cannot cleanse you? What, is there some new sin come up that Jesus did not know of? Is there some fresh transgression which at last has overcome the precious blood? You know this morning* we talked about the battle between sin and love, and we showed you how they wrestled together, and how sin seemed to be all but omnipotent, but love kept on and won the day, and gave sin a deadly fall, and set its foot upon it. Never suppose that Christ's love is going to be conquered by your sin. I will say one thing to you: if you will go to Christ, and he rejects you, I have done with preaching, —it is in vain. If you go to Christ, and he rejects you, I will mention it to-morrow—I will promulgate it next Sunday—that I have been mistaken about Christ, and that he does reject sinners. I beseech you, put it to the test. Some of us have tried it. I went to him with a rope about my neck—I mean I went conscious that I deserved to be lost. And I thought when brightest hopes elated me that perhaps he might after a long while receive me, and I might get a little hope and perhaps slink into heaven through some hole or corner. But oh, when I came to him, he received me in such a bounteous manner that the like of it was never known, except by those

* Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,055. "Ingratitude of Man."

that have tried him too. He forgave my sins without a rebuke, received me as it were into his heart, and gave me to rejoice in his finished salvation. He is a good Saviour, a precious Saviour. Oh, that the Spirit of God would lead sinners here to go and try him.

Once again let me admonish you. Don't despair, dear heart, don't despair, for you do injury to the Holy Ghost, you dishonour him if you do, for there is nothing which the blessed Spirit cannot move out of your way which is now an impediment. If thy heart be like the nether millstone, he can turn it into wax. If you cannot feel your sin, he can make you feel. What if you cannot believe? He can give you faith. What if you be dead? He can give you life. The Holy Ghost is God himself; and is anything too hard for the Lord? No, no. You must not go away and say, "All hope that I shall be saved is taken away from me." Have you fallen, sister, for by that name I will call you? Have you forfeited your good name? Yet all hope that you shall be saved is not taken away. Jesus Christ receives such as you are, and forgives them and cleanses them and puts them into his family. Young man, have you done wrong? Are you afraid of being found out? Confess the wrong that you have done, and make restitution and come to God; for there is hope for you yet. Backslider, have you come here to-night? Have you dared to show your face here again? We are glad to see you, for all hope that you should be saved is not taken away from us, though it may seem to be so to your stricken conscience. Come back, come back, come and welcome, to the Saviour's feet, and you shall find mercy now. Is there one that has said, "Well, I can believe all this for others, but not for myself. I am the one out of the catalogue; I am the odd man. There is nothing that can ever deal with me?" Thou art the very man I am seeking after. Thy hope of being saved has been wrecked; but there is a better hope than the one thou hast lost. There is life in a look at the crucified Saviour; if thou wilt but come and throw thyself at the foot of his cross, and let his drops of blood fall on thy soul, thou shalt be cleansed, ay, thou shalt be saved, to-night. The Lord God, the Father of mercies, grant to despairing souls to find peace and life just now.

III. I pass on to the last phase of this cry. At times I have heard the exclamation, "All hope that we should be saved is taken away," when I have SYMPATHISED IN IT—sympathised with those who uttered it, because, not once nor twice but many a time have I felt the same. Children of God do not always find it smooth sailing to heaven. Even in the good bark of Christ-crucified there are storms. Christ may be in the vessel, but he may be asleep, and the ship may be tossed with the tempest. I shall describe with great brevity what I believe to be with some Christians a frequent experience. The light of God's countenance is taken away from us. We were sitting

yesterday at the banquet of wine with Christ, with his banner of love waving over us, and now to-day we cry, He hath brought me into darkness, not into light! He hath turned against me his fierce anger! Oh, that I knew where I might find him that I might come even to his feet, for, truly, he is turned against me and he smites me with a heavy hand! At such seasons it will happen that our graces will refuse to act. Like some flowers that shut up their cups when the sun is gone, so will our love and our faith shut themselves up. They are reflectors, when there is no light without they cannot reflect any within. I have known what it is to search my heart through and through without being able to discover any spark of love to Jesus Christ in it, ay, and to bring my soul to the closest investigation, with diligent enquiry asking, "Is this faith, or is it presumption? Is it really trusting in Christ, or is it all a fond persuasion of my own, an unwarranted confidence, a false security? At such times you may rest assured that the devil will cast in suggestions to torment us. He is an old coward: he always strikes the saints when they are down. I only wish he would meet me on some sunny day when my faith is strong and Christ is with me, I would give him a wound or two for himself! But, alas, he comes on us in the dark, when we have been slipping and tumbling down about in that Valley of Humiliation, where we are afraid of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and there he stands right in the way and swears that he will spill our soul's blood, but farther on the road to heaven we shall never go; and then, if Satan comes, and his tyrannical voice is heard, the dogs that erst did lay quiet within our soul begin to howl, and the corruptions that we almost thought dead and buried suddenly lift their hydra heads. Seems it not as though the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and a very Noah's flood, a mighty deluge breaks forth to inundate even the mountains of our last hope, till we seem to have no chance of escape and the soul is ready to die. Perhaps at this moment we turn to the word of God: and it seems all a blank. The very promises that used to cheer us refuse to speak to us. We go where the saints of God go to hear the gospel, but we find no comfort there. The word appears to condemn rather than console us. Peradventure, at that very minute we are assailed with some temporal trouble, and when spiritual trouble and temporal trouble come together and two seas meet—ah, it is hard for the poor bark to keep above the water at all. Yet have we known it so. There has been a perplexity about money, or an anxiety about a sick child, or sore disquietude concerning a dear sick wife, or a dire apprehension that the health of our body, or the stability of our circumstances is menaced. A strange fever, a wild deliriousness has seized us. At the same time there has been this horrible thought, "After all may I not have been deluded?" and Satan howls out, "Why, of course you were! You are no child

of God!" and the flesh prevails awhile over the spirit, and conscience itself becomes a tormentor, upbraids and accuses us; then alas! for our poor vessel—it seems as if all hope that we should be saved were utterly taken away.

Well, but cannot we turn to prayer at such times as that? Yes, brethren, and that is the only thing we can do; and perhaps the only prayer we can get at then is a groan or a sigh, and it is a thousand mercies that if we cannot pray we can groan, or, if we cannot get to a groan, we can breathe, and our very breath of desire is accepted of God. When we are so down in the dust, so crushed, and broken, and bruised, that we could not put half-a-dozen sentences together, and would not dare to utter even one as children of God, we may still come as sinners and say, "Lord receive a poor worm of the dust, and if I never was thy child yet, make me one now. Take me just as I am! I come to thee just as I thought I did before, and, sink or swim, I rest my guilty soul on Christ."

Now, why I have introduced this at all is just this. There are many young believers who get into such a squall, and do not know what to make of it. They say, "Why, had I been a child of God I could not have drifted into this frightful tempest." How sayest thou so? Did not David go through it? He said, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." You must be very little acquainted with the history of the people of God if you think that they are strangers to these conflicts. There are some old mariners here that I could call up into the pulpit, if it were needed, to tell you that they have done business on great waters many years, and they have encountered many storms. You cannot expect to be upon these seas and not have tossings to and fro sometimes. The strongest faith that ever was in this world has sometimes faltered. Even Abraham had times when his faith was exceeding weak, though, indeed, at other times it staggered not at the promise through unbelief. David was a great man in battle, but he waxed faint, and had like to have been slain. So you will find the bravest of God's servants have their times when it is hard to hold their own; when they would be glad to creep into a mouse-hole, if they could there find themselves a shelter. But this is the point, dear brothers and sisters—no soul that rests in Jesus will ever be wrecked. You may have the tempests and tossings, but you will come to land; be sure of that. The old story tells us of Cæsar in the storm, when he said to the trembling captain, "Fear not! Thou carriest Cæsar and all his fortunes!" Now, Christ is in the same boat with all his people. If one of his members can perish, he must perish too. "Strong language!" say you. Well, it is all in that verse—"Because I live ye shall live also." You know, if you have got a man and you put him in the water, as long as his head is above the

water you cannot drown him. There are his feet down in the mud; they will not drown, and he cannot drown. There are his hands in the cold stream; the hands are not drowned, cannot be, because his head is all safe. Now, look at our glorious Head. See where he is exalted in the highest heavens, at the right hand of the Father. The devil cannot drown me, and cannot drown you if you are a member of Christ's body, because your Head is safe. Your Head is safe, and you are safe too. Rest you in this; that your faith may be shaken, but it cannot be destroyed if you are resting upon Christ. Your little temporary foundations that may have overlain Christ may move, but the rock of Christ Jesus never can. You remember Mr. James Smith telling a story of a good woman, whom he visited upon her dying bed. He said to her, "Well, my sister, how are you? Are your spirits good?" "Yes," she said:—

> "The gospel bears my spirit up,
> A faithful and unchanging God
> Lays the foundation of my hope
> In oaths, and promises, and blood."

"But," said the minister, "don't you feel yourself very sinking?" "Sir," she said with surprise, "What do you say?" He repeated his question, "Don't you feel yourself in these times weak and sinking?" She said to him, "Minister, I would not have believed that you would have put such a question, but as you have I must answer it. What do you say? Sinking! sinking! Did you ever hear of anyone sinking through a rock? If I stood upon the sand I might sink, but standing upon the rock, how can I sink?"

Glory be to God in Christ, we are on that rock, and sinking there is none for us. God bring you all there, and to him shall be the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts xxvii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MINISTRY OF GRATITUDE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And immediately she arose and ministered unto them."—Luke iv. 39

PETER'S wife's mother had been sick of a great fever, and had been restored by the touch of the Saviour's hands, and by the power of the Saviour's word. The grace of God does not secure us from trial. The house of Peter and of Andrew, (for it was common to them both,) was a highly favoured one; the grace of God had passed by many other houses, but had selected this for its dwelling-place; and yet in that abode there was great sickness,—the wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and was near to die. This was no small grief to the household, but that grief was for their lasting benefit. God loves his chosen too well to let them always live without the rod. If he loved us less he might allow us unalloyed pleasure, but the love of our wise Father is too great to deprive us of the sacred benefits of affliction. Sickness came to that house not as an enemy, but as a friend; for it was the means whereby Christ's great power was made manifest to that family, and through his power his love. The wife's mother could never have been so distinguished a subject of the Redeemer's power if she had not been prostrated with fever. The malaria from the marshes around the city occasioned her being made a trophy of our Lord's divine energy; the worst of ills are often the black horses upon which the very best of blessings ride to us. It was no small honour to Peter that his house became the head-quarters of the Saviour. The sick thronged the door; as the sun went down, and the Sabbath was over, the multitude brought persons afflicted with all manner of diseases and panted to reach that favoured dwelling to lay them before the Lord. The healing power which had displayed itself within, poured forth from the house like a mighty flood, and all who drank of it were restored; that house contained the spring-head, and was beyond measure honoured thereby. Surely for many a year that house would be one of the most notable in the city:—surely it would be called the House of the Great Physician.

Not like that ancient house in Antwerp detestable because it was the den of the Inquision, but dear to many of the healed ones and their sons, as the Hospital of Mercy, the Palace of Blessing.

Peter among the Apostles is singularly honoured, for everything about him was in some way or other connected with a miracle. His person—it was by a miracle that he had walked the waters; it was by a miracle that he had been saved from drowning when the Saviour stretched out his hand and bade him stand fast upon the liquid wave. There was a miracle in connection with his boat, for it was from that boat that the miraculous draught of fishes had been taken, and it was filled so full that it began to sink, and Simon knelt down and adored the Saviour. There was a miracle in connection with Peter's rusty sword; he cut off with it the ear of the high priest's servant, but the Master healed the wound that his rash defender made. And here, in this case, there was a miracle performed upon his relative,—his wife's mother was restored from a great fever by the almighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian man should be ambitious to have the hand of God connected with everything that he has, so that when he looks upon his house he may see God's providence in giving it to him; when he looks upon the garments that he wears he may see them to be the livery of love, and may view the food upon his table as the daily gift of divine charity. In looking back upon his whole biography, the believer may see bright spots where the presence of God flames forth and makes the humblest circumstances to be illustrious: but, above all, it ought to be his prayer that God's hand should be very conspicuous in connection with his relatives, that of every one of them it might be said, "The Lord restored her," or, "The Lord gave him spiritual life in answer to my prayer." May husband, wife, children, servants, all receive healing from "the beloved Physician"; may our whole household be, "holiness unto the Lord," and may all sing for joy, because the Lord has done great things for them whereof we are glad.

The occurrence about which we are to speak this morning happened on a Sabbath day. Sabbaths were generally Christ's great chosen field days to break down the superstitiously rigid observance of the Sabbath amongst the Pharisees, and because it seemed as a holy day to be peculiarly adapted for the display of the greatest works of the holy Saviour. It was a Sabbath day, and the poor patient was probably lying there complaining in her soul that she could not go to the synagogue, or mingle with the people where prayer was wont to be made. Perhaps her fever had reduced her to such a state that she was quite unable to remember Christ the healer, and unable to breathe a prayer to him. But Peter and Andrew went to him, and told the case, and besought him to come and heal her. It is a blessing for thee, my friend, even though thou be sick in soul, to have saints for thy relatives—to have some in the household who will remember thee in prayer, and speak into the ear of Christ on thy behalf; if through despair or depression of spirit thou canst not pray for thyself, happy art thou that there are compassionate friends who will speak unto the King on thy behalf. One Christian in a family may bring a great blessing to it; but here were two, for Simon and his brother Andrew were both here; and if two of you are agreed as touching any one thing concerning the

Master's kingdom, it shall be done unto you. The two prevailed with the Saviour, and, on that Sabbath day, when the patient little dreamed it, the Saviour came to her lowly room, and, standing over her in infinite pity, he first spoke a royal word of rebuke to the disease, and then, lifting her up gently in his own kind familiar manner she found herself perfectly restored to health. What love she must have felt to her gracious benefactor! Little wonder is it that thankfulness glowed in her heart, and being healed, she rose at once and began to serve her healer. Her ministering commenced from the very hour of her recovery. Of that ministering we are about to speak. "Immediately she arose and ministered unto them."

I. Now, the fact that this restored woman began at once to minister to Christ and to his disciples proves, first, THE CERTAINTY OF HER CURE; and there are no better ways of proving the thoroughness of our conversion than by conduct similar to hers. Suppose now, in order to prove that this woman was really restored, we were critically to examine the *modus operandi* of Christ, the way in which he usually worked, and show that on this occasion he operated in the regular orthodox fashion; suppose the Master had been accustomed, as he was not, to use one set of ceremonies over everybody whom he healed, and we were to say, "Well, he has done this, that, and the other, as he is accustomed to do; therefore, the woman is healed." it would not be at all conclusive reasoning; yet this is the reasoning of a great many. This child was baptised, this young person was confirmed, and afterwards took the sacrament, and consequently this individual is regenerated in baptism, and established in grace, and so on. The ceremonials are correct, and therefore the work is done. Some may believe such reasoning; I marvel that they should; but to us it seems that there is a far better way of testing whether persons have grace or not; and, moreover, if these aforesaid baptismally-regenerated people and sacramentally-confirmed people live in sin like other people, it appears to us that they have none of the grace of God in them, let them pretend to have received it however they may. If the woman had still been hot with fever and had all the symptoms of her disease continued in her, it would have availed nothing to have said, "This has been done and the other;" the woman would not have been healed; and if men live like unregenerate sinners, depend upon it the work of the Holy Spirit is not in them.

Suppose the patient had lain there and had begun to talk about how she felt, how much better she was, what a strange sensation passed through her when the Saviour rebuked the disease, and how strangely well she felt; yet if she had not risen up, but had lain there still, there would have been no evidence of her restoration, at any rate none that you or I could judge of. So when persons tell us that they have felt great changes of heart, that they know they are renewed because they enjoy this and love that, and hate the other, we are very hopeful, and desire to believe what they say; but, after all, trees are known by their fruits, and converted people, while they will themselves know their inward experience, cannot convince us by it; we must see their outward ministerings for Christ. If their actions be holy, if their lives be purified, then shall we know, but not till then, that their nature is renewed.

Suppose this good woman, still lying upon her bed, had begun to say, "Well, I hope I am healed," and had begun to express some feeble expectation that one day she would be able to exercise the functions of health, we could not have known that she was restored. Something more was wanted than mere hopes and expectations. Or suppose she had leaped out of her bed in wild excitement, rushed down the street, and performed strange antics, it would have been no proof that she was recovered, but it would have made us feel sure that she was in a delirium, and the fever still strong upon her. So when we see persons inactive as to holiness, we cannot believe that they are saved; or when we see them full of empty excitement about religion, but not serving God in the common acts of life, we think them to be in the delirium of a sinful presumption, but cannot regard them as healed by the cooling, calming hand of the Great Physician, who, when he puts out the fever, restores the soul to quiet and peace. The woman gave a much better proof than any of these could be. This leads us to remark that the only irresistible proof with on-lookers of a person being spiritually healed by Christ, must be found in the change in his conduct, and especially in his henceforth living to serve Christ, and to be obedient to him. This is the test and nothing short of it.

When we see holy living in the man who was once a gross offender, we are quite sure that Christ has healed him, because the man begins to do what he could not have done before. Perhaps this poor fevered woman might have made some shift to have done something for the Saviour, but the unconverted man is dead in trespasses and sin; he may go through forms of religion, but real holiness is far above and out of his sight; he cannot obey the law of God; his nature is set against it; he is unable to walk in the way of God's commandments; therefore, when we see him doing so, we exclaim, "This is the finger of God; God has healed that man, or else he would not be able to live as he is now living." Besides, the unconverted man before conversion hates holiness, he is disinclined to it, so that in his case, when his life becomes pure and upright, when he spends and is spent in the service of Jesus Christ, you know that this must be the work of the Holy Spirit in his soul, for nothing else could have changed his nature but the same Omnipotence which first of all created him. God's hand is in that conversion, which is proved by the holiness of the man's outward character. Beside this, while the sinner is disinclined to everything that is holy, we know that he especially despises the Saviour, and thinks little of his people; consequently, when a man is brought to serve the Saviour, and to be willing to do good to the children of God for Christ's sake, there is a sure mark that a miracle has been wrought in him which has touched the secret springs of his being, and altogether transformed him. The woman's rising up to minister to our Lord was a sure sign of returned health, and the change of outward character which leads a man to devote himself to the service of Christ, is even more infallibly a proof of true salvation.

I want you to note however, dear friends, for a moment, the nature of the acts which this restored woman performed, because they are symbolical of the best form of actions by which to judge of a person's being renewed. Her duties were humble ones. She was probably the

head of the household, and she began at once to discharge the duties of a housewife: duties unostentatious and commonplace. Many persons who profess to be converted aspire at once to preaching; a pulpit for them is the main thing, and a large congregation is their ambition. They must needs do some great thing, and occupy the chief seat in the synagogue. But this good woman did not think of preaching; women are always best when they don't; but she thought of washing Christ's feet and preparing him necessary food, which was her proper business. To these kind but simple actions she devoted herself. Attention to humble duties is a better sign of grace than an ambition for lofty and elevated works. There is probably far more grace in the loving service of a mother towards Christ in bringing up her children in the fear of God, than there might be if she were well known as taking a leading part in great public movements; there may be more service for Christ done by a workman in discharging his duties as such, and trying to do good to his fellow workmen, than if he aspired to become a great leader of the minds and thoughts of others. Of course there are exceptions, for glorious was Deborah and great shall be her name in Israel, and those who are sent of God to lead his church shall not be without their reward, but even then when they have to look for personal evidences of grace they never dare say, "We know that we are passed from death unto life because we preach the gospel," for they remember that Judas did the same; they never say, "We are confident of salvation because God has wrought wonders by us," for they remember that the son of perdition had the same distinction; but they fall back upon the same evidences which prove the truth of the religion of humbler people, they rejoice in testimonies common to all the elect. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." The humbler graces and duties are the best tests. Hypocrites mimic all public duties, but the private and concealed life of true godliness they cannot counterfeit; and because they cannot "do so with their enchantments" we feel like the men of Egypt, that "this is the finger of God."

Remember, too, that this good woman attended to home duties. She did not go down the street a hundred yards off to glorify Christ; she, I dare say, did that afterwards; but she began at home: charity begins there and so should piety. That is the best religion which is most at home at home. Grace which smiles around the family hearth is grace indeed. If your own household cannot see that you are godly, depend upon it nobody else can; and if your parents or children have grave doubts about the sincerity of your religion, I am afraid you ought to have grave doubts about it yourself. Peter's mother-in-law ministered to Christ at home, and that was clear evidence of her being restored to health, and in your case it will be the best witness to your conversion if you serve Jesus in the bosom of your family and make your house the dwelling place of all that is kind and good and holy.

She attended to suitable duties, duties consistent with her sex and condition. She did not try to be what God had not made her, but did what she could. She attended to natural duties, duties which suggested themselves in a moment, and were not far fetched and fanciful. She set about doing present duties required there and then, and did not wait to

serve the Lord in a year's time. In a quiet natural manner, she pursued her calling as if it never occured to her to do otherwise. If somebody had thought it wonderful that she ministered to Christ, she would have been surprised at them. It seemed to her the most natural thing for her to do. Dear soul, I dare say while lying in bed sick there were fifty things she would have liked to have done—what housewife would not in such a case see many grievous arrears of work all around her?—but Jesus being there, no sooner did she feel her health returned than she at once arose to discharge the offices of grateful hospitality, as a matter of course. How could she do otherwise but wait upon Jesus and his friends. Now, observe, that those good works which prove a man to be a Christian are not such as he could boast of, he does them as a matter of course; he feels he could not do otherwise, and wonders that anybody else can. Is he born of God? He yearns to teach others about the Saviour; he cannot help it; his tongue wants to be talking about Jesus. Then he begins to give of his substance to the poor; it does not strike him as being at all a remarkable or extraordinary thing; he wonders anyone can help being generous to real need. Now, he begins to enquire about the little children in the neighbourhood; can he get them into the Sunday-school? Or he occupies himself with some other form of Christian work, and he does it because he feels it to be inevitable for him to do so; it is one of the instincts of the new nature which God the Holy Spirit has implanted in him. Those natural, commonplace duties which grow out of holy instincts within, are the best evidence of a work of grace: the more genuinely natural and unstrained the better. Vain is the religion which aims at unnatural conditions, and makes much of distinctions of a needless kind. What is there in a peculiar garb, or affectation of speech, or separation of residence? These minister to our own vainglory; true godliness aims not at her own honour, but is content to labour among the many, to be a man among men, yet differing in nothing but character. Ours it is, as the true salt, to mingle with the masses; not to seek a proud isolation. We are men, not monks; and our sisters are women, not nuns. All that interests men interests us, we only differ from our race by being conformed to the image of Jesus, while they wear the image of the fallen Adam. May God grant us grace to exhibit the Christianity of common life, the real and practical Christianity of every day. Christianity is not with hermits in their cells, nor nuns in their convents, nor priests in their cloisters; those are all cowardly soldiers who shun the battle of life, but the true faith is the joy and strength of all who love the Lord and fight his battles on the broad plains of life. True religion must be manifested in your workshops, in your houses, in the streets, and in the fields, in the nursery and in the parlour. This celestial flower reveals its richest perfume, not in the conservatories of unnatural seclusion, but under the clear sky of human life, for "as a flower of the field so it flourishes," where God has planted it.

One other point before leaving this; these things become a conclusive proof of grace in the heart, when they are voluntarily rendered as this good woman's ministry was. I do not read that she was asked to do anything for Christ, but it suggested itself to her at once, without command or request. Her work was done promptly, for "*immediately* she

arose" and did it. She no sooner had power to work than the occasion was seized without delay. Promptness is the soul of obedience: "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." I doubt not she did her ministering cheerfully. There is all the air of cheerfulness about the words "She arose," it reads as if with alacrity, vigour, sprightliness, and eagerness she entered into the service. That is the best service for God that is done promptly, without delay; voluntarily, without pressing; generously, without grudging; heartily, without complaining. With us it is not "This you should do, and this you must do," but we serve Jesus because we love to do so, and labour for him is to us a joy and a delight.

II. I have thus brought before you the first point of our discourse, now notice the second one, which is most interesting. This woman's ministry for Christ and his disciples showed, secondly, THE PERFECTION OF HER CURE. It may not strike you for a moment, but just think. She was sick with a fever. Supposing a prophet should visit your house and restore your friend from a great fever; yet the person healed would not be able to rise from the bed for some time; fever leaves extreme weakness behind, and when the fever itself is entirely gone, it needs some two or three weeks, and sometimes more, before the person who has been prostrated by it will be able to go about his daily work. This was healing like a God indeed, a divine work emphatically, because the woman was so healed that all her weakness vanished, and she was able to proceed to her work without difficulty. And, beloved, it is one mark of a work of grace in the soul when the converted man becomes at once a servant of Christ. The human theory of moral reformations makes time a great element in its operations. If you are to reclaim a great offender you must win him from one vice first, and then from another; you must put him through a process of education by which he gradually perceives that what he has been accustomed to do is bad for himself, and wakes up to the conviction that honesty and sobriety will be the best for his own profit. Time is required by the moral reformer, or he cannot develop his plans. He ridicules the idea of effecting anything in an hour or two. Man, the creature of time, must have time for the accomplishment of his very imperfect works,—but to the eternal God time is nothing. His miracles annihilate time. A man who is converted is cured at once of his sins; the tap root of his sins is cut away there and then, and though some of his sins linger, yet every one has received the stroke which will prove its deathblow. Once for all, in a moment, when a man believes and is born again, the axe is laid at the root of all the evil trees within him, sin is there and then condemned to die; and what is more, all graces are in a moment implanted in the soul, not in perfection—they will have to grow,—but they are all sown in the man in a moment in embryo, so that the renewed sinner, though he has only been born again five minutes, has within him the embryo of the perfect saint who shall stand before the throne of God; and this is one of the marvels which certify the work to be divine. For note, beloved, those who have just been converted to God can worship God, can praise God, can pray to God, can love God, though they were strangers to these things up to then; and some of the sweetest worship that God himself ever hears comes from the hearts of

the newly regenerate. Of all the prayers that strike the Christian's ear like music, surely among the sweetest are the broken pleadings of those who have just found the Saviour. I delight in the expressions of faith of elderly and full-grown Christians,—they are exceedingly instructive and precious; but, oh! that first grip of the hand, that first flash of the eye, that first tear of joy, when a soul has seen Christ for the first time, and stands astonished at the matchless vision of incarnate love! Why, there is no worship sweeter beneath the sun! The woman arises at once and ministers to Christ, and the sinner arises at once and begins to adore Christ. Did not I say that the newly-converted sinner can love, and does love his Lord as soon as ever he is born to God? I must correct myself. He not only can and does love, but he loves beyond most others, for very seldom does men's after-love exceed in fervency the love of their espousals, which is also called their first love. This standard love is implanted in us at once, all blooming and full of perfume. Hating Christ one minute, hearts have been brought to be ravished with his love the next; the men were enemies to God an hour ago, and now they could die to defend his gospel, so changed are their natures. This must be a divine work. If that which was waterflood, quenching every spark of fire, should suddenly blaze and glow like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, God alone could have wrought the change. Say who has turned the waters of raging hatred into the flame of holy love? Who has done it but the mighty God himself? If the iceberg suddenly becomes a flaming beacon, who can have wrought this marvel but the Miracle Worker who alone doeth great wonders? Glory be to God we often see it, and he shall have the praise of it! How pure some men's lives become at conversion,—pure at once, though before they were polluted with every vice. Certain sins we may have to fight with all our lives, but a renewed man usually has no difficulty whatever with the grosser sins. For instance, I have known a man habituated to blasphemy, who probably never did since he was a boy speak a dozen sentences without an oath, and yet, after he has been converted, the profane habit has never molested him. We have known some who have been troubled with a ferocious temper which made them like demons, but from the moment of conversion they have been remarkable for their singular gentleness and meekness. We have known misers instantly display the freest generosity, and thieves become scrupulously honest. Though the temptation to old sin may return, yet for the most part those who have been saved from gross vices have been the greatest loathers of the very mention or name of their former abominations. Such is the work of God in the soul, that these evils are driven out at once and sent right away, and then the man who before had been an adept in all manner of evil work becomes as much an expert in all manner of holy labour. He may not at once have picked up the technicalities of religion—perhaps it would be as well he never did—but he gets to the bottom of it, the secret of it, and goes to work for Jesus Christ in his own fashion and way, with wonderful wisdom and extraordinary skill from the very first. Some of the best evangelists we have ever seen have been those who learned at once to evangelise, who seemed to have known it from the first hour in which they were converted to God, taking to it from inward love as the young swans take to the stream. Some of the

best persons who speak to others about their souls privately, began to do so immediately they found the Saviour, and attained to the sacred art—and a blessed art it is—as though they were in a moment touched by the hand of God and inspired for the service he meant them to render. Now, what is the practical drift of this second remark but this? As it proved the real divinity of this woman's cure that she was able immediately to go to work for Christ, so you young converts should hold the honour of Christ in great esteem, and prove the reality of his grace in your souls by bringing forth immediate fruit to his honour. See if you cannot at once rise and minister to him. Be as zealous as the dying thief; he had no sooner known Christ than he confessed him, and he did the only thing he could do for his dying Lord, he rebuked the other malefactor who had reviled the Saviour. Oh, if you love Jesus, do not wait till you have been ten years Christians; serve him now. If you are healed from sin, do not wait for experience; with your inexperience of everything except the new birth, go and seek the good of others. Do not suppose you must be trained for this war through a long process of spiritual drill, but march forward at once with all your heart and soul, in the freshness of your newly-given life. It may be you will achieve greater triumphs than some of the older ones; for, alas! some of them are dry and sapless, and have long forgotten their early days of enthusiasm. In too many Christians the peach has lost its bloom, the flower has withered from the stem; they are not now loving and earnest, but they have declined into the sere and yellow leaf of religion. Go ye with the dew of the morning still upon your spirit, and I know not what great and gracious works the Lord may do by you.

III. Now we pass on to a third head briefly. Peter's wife's mother in ministering to Christ proved HER OWN GRATITUDE. Her acts of hospitality were an exhibition of her thankfulness. Brethren, if we want to evidence our gratitude to Christ we had better do it in the same way as she did. There is no record of her having fallen at Jesus' feet, and saying, "Blessed be thy name;" she may have done so: the Bible has not room for many holy expressions, though it finds space for gracious acts. I do not know that she sat down and sang a hymn, perhaps she did: good women before her have done so, and I hope they will after her; but the hymn is not recorded: Holy Scripture has not room for all the hymns which good people sing, but it finds a corner for the actions which they perform. We have the Acts of the Apostles, though we have not the devotional emotions, the hymns, or the pious resolutions of the apostles. This good woman proved her gratitude by tangible deeds. Did she not say to herself, "The Lord has served me; I will serve him!" It never strikes an awakened person that mere words are a fit return for the grace of God. Can you give for the Lord's healing fruit a handful of mere leaves from the tree of talk? It looks like mockery. Give him the leaves, but wrap the fruit up within them. Let him have true action, consecrated service, for this is the fittest fruit of a grateful heart.

Observe that it is not said that she waited upon Christ before she was healed. The fevered patient is first restored, and then she begins to minister. I am far from exhorting any of you to serve Christ in your

lives if your inner life be not first of all renewed by him. There must be a regenerated heart through his blessed touch, or else a renewed life may be imitated but cannot be truly possessed. First the healing, then the serving. The healing is first, but note well that the serving follows close at its heels. If thou be saved, arise and work out thine own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in thee to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Since the light is now kindled, let it shine forth from thee; since Christ has opened in thy soul a well of living waters, let it flow out of the midst of thee, as a river of water, for his service and the benefit of thy fellowmen.

This good soul knew to what end she had been raised up. She knew *from whom* she had received the healing: it was from the Lord alone. She knew *from what* she was restored, namely, from the very jaws of death. She knew *to what* she was restored, for she felt that health and strength had returned to her, and, therefore, she guessed rightly *for what* she was restored, namely, that she might wait upon the Lord. Thou, my brother, art saved from hell, thou art lifted up into spiritual life and acceptance, thou art ennobled and made an heir of heaven; what was this done for but that thou mightest minister to thy Lord here, and glorify him hereafter? Our gratitude ought to teach us the divine object of grace, and we ought to take care that it be attained. The Lord cannot have saved us at such an expense as the death of his own Son, for any reason less than that we should live unto him. What is the reckoning of all our grateful hearts about this? Is it not this, that if we are bought with a price, we are not our own: that if the Holy Spirit has given us a new nature, it must be that we should lead a new life, and that our new life must be consecrated to him who is the author of it? Beloved, true gratitude always leads us to serve, and it distinctly makes our healing Lord the object of our service; it puts him in the forefront. "She arose and ministered unto them." To him first, and to his disciples next—to the Head, and for the Head's sake to all the members; to the Redeemer, and because of him to all the redeemed. I put to each one here present who has been healed from sin and saved from spiritual death by Christ, this question—What art thou rendering unto thy Lord? What art thou doing for him? Begin with him; do it as unto him; do what thou doest in his presence, and present it at his dear feet; then I know thou wilt be doing something for his people too: his poor thou wilt befriend, his backsliding ones thou wilt seek to gather in, his sick ones thou wilt visit, his comfortless ones thou wilt console, his wandering ones—as yet uncalled—thou wilt seek after them; his lost sheep, thine anxieties will go out for them; thou wilt minister to him and to his chosen, to all the members of his body. What art thou doing, brother? What art thou doing, sister? I do not ask you now in my own name, for I am no master of yours, neither are ye accountable to me, but I ask it in the name of him whose hands were pierced for you, and whose heart was set abroach by the soldier's spear for your redemption. Oh, what are you doing for him? Do you love him? If you love him feed his lambs and his sheep. If you love, serve; and if you serve, serve *him* first, and serve his children and his people next, and you will prove your gratitude.

IV. But now, lastly, this woman's ministering to Christ proved in the fourth place THE CONDESCENSION OF THE PHYSICIAN. He who healed her of the fever did not need her to minister to him; he who had power to heal diseases had certainly power to subsist without human ministry. If Christ could raise her up he must be omnipotent and divine, what need then had he of a woman's service? Might he not have used the grand style of the Old Testament, and said, "If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the cattle on a thousand hills are mine;" but instead of this the mighty Master of all angels condescended to be waited upon by a poor female. It was great condescension on Christ's part that he needed ministry, and great gentleness that he so often chose woman's ministry; he came to earth and the first garments of his infancy were wrapped about him by a woman's hands, and here he dwelt till at last he died, and holy women bound him up in the cerements of the tomb and laid him in the sepulchre. Matchless marvel was this of condescension, that he who is almighty and ever-blessed should stoop from heaven to need the ministry of human beings. He has ministered to us by humbling himself to accept mortal ministry.

Peter's wife's mother was one of the despised poor, but Jesus honoured her. What was she but a fisherman's wife, at any rate the mother of a fisherman's wife, a poor, obscure, illiterate woman, yet Christ allowed her to wait upon him, an honour which Herodias the royal princess never had. So the Lord to-day should be beloved of us for his humility in allowing us to wait upon him, in allowing *me*, in allowing *you*, to do anything for his dear name's sake. I do not wonder that Christ allowed Paul and Peter and John to serve him, but that he should suffer *me* to do it! I am overwhelmed with astonishment at it! Do not you marvel also? It seems easy enough to believe that the blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene and other holy women were honoured of God; but that you, dear sister, should be allowed to take a part in his service, is not this marvellous? Will you not bless him, and minister with the utmost cheerfulness because you feel it to be so great a grace?

Is it not gracious on our Lord's part to leave room in his church for ministry? Suppose, now, the Lord had made all his people rich: then there would be no room for the generosity of his people to help his poor saints, and you would not have had the opportunity of proving your love to him as now you can. Suppose he had converted all his elect by the secret working of his Spirit without any teaching, then he would not have wanted you in the Sunday School, nor you with your tracts, nor me with my sermons, and we should have had nothing to do for Christ; we should have been sighing and crying, "The good Master has not permitted us to give him anything? Why, on our birthdays our little children love to give their father something, if it is only a bunch of flowers out of the garden, or a fourpenny piece with a hole in it; they like to do it to show their love; and wise parents will be sure to let their children do such things for them. So is it with our great Father in heaven. What are our Sunday-school teachings and our preachings, and all that, but these cracked fourpenny pieces? Just nothing at all; but the Lord allows us to do his work for his own love's sake. His love to us finds a

sweetness in our love to him. I am most thankful that in the church there is room for such a variety of ministries. Some brethren are so queerly constituted that I cannot tell what they were made for; but I believe if they are God's people there is a place for them in his spiritual temple. A man who was accustomed to buy timber and work it up, on one occasion found a very crooked stick of wood in his bargain, and said to his son as he put it aside, "I cannot tell, John, whatever I shall do with it; it is the ugliest shap d piece I ever bought in my life;" but it so happened while building a barn that he wanted a timber exactly of that shape, and it fitted in so thoroughly well that he said, "It really seems as if that tree grew on purpose for that corner." So our gracious Lord has arranged his church, so that every crooked stick will fit in somewhere or other, if it be only a tree of his own right hand planting: he has made it with a purpose, and knows when it will answer that purpose. How this ought to rebuke any who say, "I do not see what I can do." Dear friend, there is a peculiar work for you; find it out,—and methinks it will not be far off: the exercise of a little reflection will soon enable you to discover it. Be grateful that this is a certain fact, without exception, that every child of God who has been healed has some ministry which he can render to Christ, and which he ought to render at once. May the Lord give to everyone of you to show your gratitude in this way, and while you do it, let it always be in an adoring spirit, saying, "Lord, I thank thee I am allowed to go to my Sunday-school class." Do not look at your work as a burden: say, "Lord, I thank thee I am permitted to do it." "O God, I bless thee that I am allowed to go round that little district and call at the houses." You Bible-women, bless God that he has let you be Bible-women: and you city missionaries, thank God that you are allowed to be city missionaries. "Oh," saith one, "I can hardly do that because I suffer so much abuse and so much ill-treament." Bless God, dear brother, that he counts you worthy to suffer for his name's sake. You know the old story of Sir Walter Raleigh. When Queen Elizabeth, one day, came to a miry place in the road, he took off his cloak for her to walk upon. Did he regret it? No, he was delighted at it, and half the court wished for another muddy place that they might be able to do the same. Oh, you that love your Lord, be willing to lie down for Christ's sake, and pave the miry parts of the way by being despised for his name's sake. This honour you should covet, and should not shun. Arise, and minister ye healed ones; and as for you who are not healed, may you believe in him who is able to restore you with his touch. He is mighty to save. Believe in him and you shall live. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON, Luke iv.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MY PRAYER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 22ND, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Quicken thou me in thy way."—Psalm cxix. 37.

I THINK you will find the prayer for quickening repeated nine times in this Psalm. The form of it differs, but it is always the same vehement cry, "Quicken thou me, O Lord." In addition to this, you will hear David twice acknowledge that God had quickened him, saying on one occasion, "Thy word hath quickened me," and in another place, "Thy precepts have quickened me;" so that eleven times in one Psalm David turns his contemplations to the subject of quickening, and this shows us the very great importance which he attached thereto.

Remember well that this Psalm is dedicated to the praise of the word of God. Throughout its entire length it sounds forth the honour of God's statutes, and in some way or other the word of the Lord is mentioned in every one of its one hundred and seventy-six verses. The psalm is a star of the first magnitude, and all its beams direct us to the divine statutes. It is clear from this that there must be an intimate connection between quickening and the word of God. Indeed it is so, for when we are much acquainted with the word of God we also discover more of our own deadness and lack of spiritual life. And, moreover, inasmuch as we find David twice blessing God that the word had quickened him, we see another connection between the word and quickening, namely, that while the word convinces us of our death, it is also the means in the hand of the Spirit of God of our resurrection to newness of life. It kills, but it also makes alive. It quickens, and it sustains what it begets. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God" shall man live. Wouldst thou mourn thy sluggishness? See it in the light of God's word. Wouldst thou escape from thy sloth? Be animated by the holy warmth of revealed truth. For both purposes, for conviction and for edification, the precious truths which are set forth in Scripture by the Holy Spirit will be exceedingly efficacious.

I purpose, this morning, in handling the brief prayer of our text, to note, first, that *it deals with the believer's frequent need;* and secondly, *it directs him to the sole worker of his quickening;* and thirdly, *it describes the true sphere of renewed spiritual vigour;* and fourthly, *it denotes that there may be special reasons and seasons when we should cry,* "*Quicken thou me.*"

I. The prayer before us, "Quicken thou me in thy way," DEALS WITH THE BELIEVER'S FREQUENT NEED. I am sure that this is a frequent want of believers, because we find David in this psalm so often confessing his need thereof; and where the best of God's servants feel their need of a thing, we may be quite sure that the rest of the family are under the same necessity. David seems to have been by no means sluggish in the divine life. That wonderful photograph of his internal being which we have in the book of Psalms, shows us that he was a man of intensely fervent love to God; a man whose nature was vital to a degree of sensitive and energetic energy seldom, if ever, exceeded. Panting, crying, pleading, or singing, rejoicing, exulting, he was all life, and of him it could not be said that he was neither cold nor hot. Notwithstanding the grievous fault into which he fell, his inner life was as a rule vigorous, healthy, and energetic; and yet that man of God prayed often, "Quicken thou me." Oh my soul, thou art not to be compared with David for a single moment; what need, then, hast thou to pray again and again, even with agony of soul, "Quicken thou me, O God."

But, beloved, there is no reason to refer to others of God's servants for proof of this. You yourselves know, in your own souls, that your spirit is most apt to become sluggish and that you have need frequently to put up the prayer, "Quicken thou me." Apart from him who is your life, what are you but a mass of corruption? You know this experimentally. Do you not? There are some among you who have received a more abundant measure of spiritual life than the preacher has yet obtained, but I fear me that the great majority of us are in the very opposite condition, and have need to sigh and cry over our lack of inward strength. We need to lament more deeply our manifold deficiencies. If there be a prayer in this book which well becomes my lips, it is just this, "Lord, quicken thou me in thy way." I fear that those who are least ready to confess this are the very persons who ought to own it first; and I am certain that a large number of God's people feel that they are dry and sapless and have need to be revived by fresh life from above. Let us think over this matter a minute. Some years ago we needed quickening most emphatically, but then we had no power to pray, "Quicken thou me," for we were dead in trespasses and sins. No dead man ever prayed to be quickened; such a prayer would be an index of life. A really spiritual prayer for quickening can only come from those in whom the quickening Spirit has already taken up his abode. Now, beloved, blessed be the name of the Lord, we are no longer dead as once we were: the Spirit of God has breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and we have become living souls in the family of God. Let us be thankful for this, but let us, as we look around upon the spiritually dead who swarm our streets, take care to pray for them, "Lord, quicken thou the dead in sin." Let our

relatives be the especial objects of our prayers for quickening. If we have a brother who is rotting in the grave of his iniquities, let us pray the Master to say, "Lazarus, come forth." If we have a son who is dead in sin, let us ask the Lord to raise him up even from the bier of his transgressions. Or if it be a little daughter at home, fair and lovely yet unquickened, let our prayer be to the great Master that he would come and raise her up. He is able to raise any of the spiritually dead, for he hath raised us. Let our own conversion encourage us in praying for the spiritual resurrection of others.

But, brethren, although we ourselves are quickened in that sense, we have still need to continue the prayer. Do you remember the days of your first awakening, when you had only sufficient life to mourn and lament that you had so little? The first sense of life in you was painful; you were under a sense of sin, and your guilt lay heavy upon you; you had only life enough to dread the death that never dies; your life did little else for you but enable you to tremble, to mourn, to dread, and to reproach yourself. It was the dark side of life, the pain which is the true evidence of vitality, but is terrible to endure. Then you needed fuller light and healthier life, and no prayer could have better suited you than this which is now before us, "Quicken thou me." Oh, the agonising cries of awakened sinners, theirs are no mimicries, but stern realities. Believe me, they do pray.

Since that season, for blessed be God that state is over now, we have joy and peace in believing,—not all the joy and peace we could wish, but still a good share of it; yet have we still great cause to cry aloud, and that right often, "Quicken thou me." For instance, have you never felt the need of this prayer when you have been cast down by affliction? The spirit, broken and bruised, can only rally through an infusion of fresh life. When you could not get a grip at the promises, because the hand of your faith was benumbed, you needed an increased vitality. In temporal trial, more grace was your best support; and when the trouble was not only bodily, but spiritual, then increased inner life was the doubly efficacious remedy. Do you recollect when you were broken in pieces all asunder through some surprising sin, and God, in chastisement, seemed to hunt you with the terrors of his law, then your expiring faith and swooning hope needed a new vitality? There was no restored joy for you till you learned again the meaning of the Redeemer's words, "I am the life." Lying at the foot of his cross you saw the vital blood flowing from his dear wounds, and you cried "Quicken thou me." Forth from the heart of Jesus came a stream of warm life, which entered your soul, renewed your faith, inspired you with sacred confidence, and diffused within your spirit a blessed calm in which you softly breathed the life of God, and rose as one quickened from among the dead.

How many times, also, have you been the victim of worldliness, that horrible swoon of the heart towards Christ? Even over those who try to live nearest to God, this evil influence exerts itself like some stifling vapour, engendering a dreadful sleepiness, even where it cannot accomplish death. Men after God's own heart have cried, "My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken thou me, O God." You have loved some earthly thing; some child, perhaps, has clambered into your heart's

throne while it has been fondled on your knee. Lawful loves have become unlawfully engrossing, and have eaten the Lord's portion. The Son of David has been displaced by a usurper, or at least another throne has been set up in his palace. Have you not been horrified at your own idolatry and resolved to have done with it, cost what it may? You have sought for the axe which should remove the right hand sin, the hammer which should dash down the usurper's image; but your heart has failed you, the fascination of the sin has spell-bound you. Around you the coils of the serpent have been twined, and you could not tear them off, for a poison chilled your blood and stupified your brain and heart. Ah, then you saw the beauty of the prayer, "Quicken thou me," and well was it for you that, feebly as you uttered it, it was answered from the throne of mercy. What could have stood you in good stead if you had been left a victim to the deadly drugs and mortal opiates of sin? You, my brethren, who are much engaged in business from morning to night, when things go with you very roughly, or on the other hand when they go with you very smoothly, have the deepest cause to pray, "Lord quicken thou me." Earth sticks to our hearts, especially those forms of it known as gold and silver; and lumps of adhesive earth make a pilgrim's progress tardy. You cannot wrestle in prayer while you are loaded down with worldly cares. No runner can win a race when he stoops under great weights. It is impossible to commune with God and yet to fix one's heart on money-making. While business is what it is, and the wheels of trade revolve at such a terrific rate, men had need be very vigorous in grace, or their souls will be ground to dust amid their own machinery. Oh you very busy men, ye ought day by day to plead with the Lord—"Quicken thou me, my God, lest I be overcome by the deadly influences of the world." Though I mingle little with the business or the politics of the hour, I feel a somnolent influence creep over me, from the smoke of these tents of Kedar in which I dwell, like that which Bunyan mentions in his description of the Enchanted Ground, where the very air made men drowsy. This influence tends to preaching mechanically, as an automaton might do if properly wound up, and it leads to praying by routine, after the manner of a Thibetian windmill or a Ritualistic priest. Hideous is this temptation to perform one's duties officially, because it is the time to do this and the proper hour to do that. Oh, my God, deliver us from crawling along in the ruts, and slipping sleepily along the grooves. We want life, vivacity, vigour, diligence, fervour, passion, vehemence in the service of our God, or else our Christianity is worth no more than a nutshell out of which the worm has eaten the kernel, and left nothing but rottenness. Our God is a consuming fire, and only by fire can we worship him. Sacrifices without heart are an abomination to him. The name to live is loathsome unless the spirit of life be present. The garments of a man may frighten birds, but only the heart and soul of manhood can avail with heaven. Without the living soul of sincerity and earnestness, what is religion but a charnel house, whitewashed without, but rottenness within? We must have life! First, last, and midst, we must have life; therefore to all professors I commend this prayer, "Quicken thou me."

My brethren, do not the most warm-hearted among us feel the need of more quickening? Let us consider a few matters which may awaken our desires more fully. First, let us enquire if we are as earnest in the things of God as in the common things of daily life? Is our soul as vigorous in its acts for God as in its emotions towards man? We are told by the Spirit that the time is short, and it remaineth that those who have wives be as though they had not, they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that weep as though they wept not, because all these things are passing away, and therefore our emotions about them should be comparatively slight; but spiritual things, seeing they endure for ever, ought to have a lodgment in the centre of our being, and concerning them we should think deeply and feel strongly. Sorrow for sin should be the keenest sorrow, joy in the Lord should be the loftiest of joy. Is it so? How find you it with yourselves? Suppose it be the love of a newly-married wife, is there not an intensity about it which needs no inflaming? Do you always or often find your soul so ardent towards the Lord Jesus Christ? Yet ought he not to be before all other? Or suppose it be your weeping for your lost husband or your dear departed child, you do not need excitement to grief; no, your hearts bleed all too freely, and you need arguments to assuage your sorrows: is it thus when you lament the dishonor done to the name of Jesus? Are the waterfloods quite as plentiful? Is repentance as deep and living an emotion with you as sorrow under bereavement? I fear that in these earthly matters our heart is wax, and in spiritual things it is as the nether millstone. Yet is it sad indeed that our affections entwine themselves about a mere creature but put forth no tendrils towards the Lord of love, who laid down his life for us. If you are suddenly made possessors of wealth, the joy you have over your substance is very manifest. None can question it. Or if your wealth be taken away by some loss in trade or otherwise, your distress is by no means superficial; I pray you tell me, are you equally concerned about the true riches? If you have found the priceless pearl, are you enchanted with it? If you have lost fellowship with Jesus, does the loss depress your spirit? Are you as eager to be rich in grace as to be great in wealth? Do you prize Christ as you do your profits? Are you as eager in a prayer meeting as you are on the market? I fear, brethren, that a comparison between our zeal for temporal and spiritual things would lead to very humbling conclusions, and give us reason to cry, "Lord, deaden me to this world, but quicken me towards the world to come."

The same truth will be apparent if we will think of the earnestness of men of the world in their callings and pursuits. How men will wear themselves out in seeking the secular objects on which their hearts are set! To what sacrifices will they expose themselves! The votaries of science altogether shame the followers of religion. They have penetrated into the densest swamps, defying fever and death; they have lost themselves amongst the wildest savages, or they have died amidst eternal snows. Have they not lost their lives while using deadly drugs, out of which they hoped to discover curative agents; or worn away their eyesight by weary night watchings of the orbs of heaven? Science

daily increases her martyrology, but where find we ours? Where is the chivalry of Christians? Alas, where survives the heroism of the cross? In former times the followers of Christ counted not their lives dear unto them for his sake; but now we hug ourselves in ease, and venture little for the Lord. The world has warm followers and devoted friends, but Jesus is attended by a lukewarm band of men who are more likely to sleep at Gethsemane's gates than to watch with him for a single hour. Oh Lord of love, will thou not quicken us? Behold our need, forgive our sin, and from this good hour teach us how to live.

We shall surely also be rebuked if we think of the zeal of some of the Lord's servants. Their lives should make us feel how little life we have. Put yourself, beloved brother, side by side with Paul for a few minutes. Think of his zeal unquenchable. Remember his voluntary exposure to a thousand risks; his sufferings, and his labours for the propagation of his Master's gospel. Where are we, and what are we? Alas! we blush and sink to nothing in the presence of such a man. Others of like energy have been and are in the church. Why are we so unlike them? Shame, shame upon us!

Perhaps it may touch us with some degree of feeling if we recollect what our own zeal was at one time. It never was much to boast of; when we were most earnest we could well have borne to be heated seven times hotter, and yet not become too much inflamed; but are we now as zealous as once we were? May I ask you to look back upon the early days of your religion? Oh, then ye ran where now ye creep. Ye blazed and glowed, where now but a few sparks alone are left. The love of your espousals, when you went after your Master into the wilderness, when nothing was too heavy or too hard for his dear sake, where is it now? Where is it now? As you grew in years you should have grown in zeal, for you know more of him, and you have received more from him; but is it so? Why, we thought we would push the church before us or drag the world behind us, and we meant to do I know not what, but have we done it? Then we cried, "Who art thou, great mountain?" "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain:" but the great mountain remains where it was, because our faith has declined, and our zeal has flagged. Oh, for the Spirit to re-baptise us into the fulness of his life and strength.

Once more, think dear friends, of our condition of spiritual life, and of what it ought to have been, when we remember our obligations to our Saviour. Stand in spirit at the foot of the cross and see the five wounds and the precious blood that bought us. Can you here remain unmoved? Do we gaze into yon dear face, that mirror of love and grief, and feel no love to him? Can we think of his returning into his glory, and bearing our names upon his breastplate day and night before the eternal throne, and feel no enthusiasm for him? Can we meditate upon him as from before all worlds, loving us, and to all worlds loving us still, and yet remain indifferent? O adamant, thou art flesh, and flesh is adamant this day. Why, sirs, if we lived for Jesus solely and evermore, and died a thousand deaths for him, these were cheap things to lay at the foot of his dear cross. He deserveth infinitely more from us.

Think, I pray you, of all the truths of our religion, and ask yourselves what kind of life they require of us. We believe that men are lost, and shall we be idle when in our hands is the gospel, which alone can save them? We know that men are passing into a condition in which they shall for ever abide, everlastingly blessed or eternally accursed of God, and only the truth that we have to tell them can secure them from unending misery, and can we withhold the saving word. I do not wonder that those who believe the contrary to this should take things coolly, but I do marvel at ourselves that we are so insane at heart that we are not moved to passionate earnestness for ourselves and our fellowmen. Fanaticism itself were, under some aspects of it, nothing but cold-blooded reason in the face of such truths as these. We ought to live impassioned lives, full of flaming energy, and we should if this prayer were heard, "Quicken thou me in thy way."

Thus I have spoken upon the first head. Now may we be helped to dwell upon the second, and may the Spirit bless us thereby.

II. Our text DIRECTS US TO THE SOLE WORKER OF QUICKENING. "Quicken *thou* me." David seeks quickening from the Lord alone. He goes at once to him in whom were all his fresh springs. Life is the peculiar sphere of God: he is the Lord and Giver of life. No man ever received spiritual life, or the renewal of it, from any other source but the living God. Beloved, this is worth recollecting, for we are very apt when we feel ourselves declining to look anywhere but to the Lord. We, too, often look within. "Why seekest thou the living among the dead?" You might find a diamond upon a dunghill, but you will never find spiritual refreshing in human nature. Look then to some better source than to the howling wilderness of self. We are very apt also to think that in the use of the means of grace we shall necessarily obtain reviving and refreshing. "If I can hear Mr. So-and-so preach, who has often laid his hands among my heart-strings, and brought out music thence, then I should be again awakened. Oh, could I hear him once again I should see better days." Thou dost not know. That beloved voice may have lost all power over thee. If thou lookest to the servant and not to the Master, the Master will leave the servant and the servant will be of no use to thee. Dig the pools by all manner of means; passing through the valley of Baca make it a well: but the life-refreshing water does not rise from the bottom of the well, it drops from above,—"the rain also filleth the pools." God out of heaven alone can make instrumentality to be of vital service to us. Not even the sweet succours of the Communion Table can bring back vigorous life to the Christian apart from the anointing of the Holy Ghost. Rest ye not in the outward, for it cannot touch the inward. Above all, never go to the law for reviving. Do not begin chiding yourself by saying, "This I ought to have done and I shall lose the love of God if I do not," and so on. That is all legal. The child of God, when he hears the roar of Sinai's thunder, sinks into a deeper death; it cannot rouse him into life. Slaves may be moved by terror, but not the true born child of God; a nobler motive sways his heart. Go not thou, then, to rewards and punishments for thy life; thou wilt never find it there. The ministry of the law is the ministry

of death, not of life. We must betake ourselves to the Spirit of God, who is the gift of the gospel, not of the law. Remember, beloved, that Jesus Christ is come that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Now, if any poor soul first of all obtained life from looking alone to Jesus it is clear that if she wants more life she must get it in the same way. They say that for a sick man his native air is the best. My native air was Calvary: was it not yours, dear brother? Let us together seek the blood-stained spot. Go and breathe the atmosphere of atoning love again! Get back to the cross-foot once more, and you will find effectual quickening. The Holy Spirit is the great agent by whom the life of Jesus is infused into our nature. The Holy Ghost at this moment can come upon the coldest heart in this place, and make it flame and blaze with more than angelic ardour. You are like a bush at this moment, dry and dark, but God has but to put one spark of his life in you and you will be like the bush in Horeb, which flamed like the sun. Dear sister, have you fallen very low? Go to God, for he can lift you up when no one else can. My ministry cannot quicken you, but the Lord can. He has only to send forth the divine life, and the dullest and most slothful, the most barren, the most dead, among us would become warm with apostolic fervour, and the life divine would make us shine as the glittering seraphim which surround the burning throne. Oh God, how this moves us to pray to thee! Thou canst do it. Do it now. "Quicken thou me in thy way."

Did you notice that in the text nothing is said about the means by which the Lord is to quicken us? David leaves that to God's discretion. Let him use his own methods. There is a prayer—you will find it in the one hundred and forty-ninth verse, and also in the one hundred and fifty-sixth—in which David prays, "Quicken thou me in thy judgment," as if he left it to infinite prudence to select its own methods. He did not pretend to say what was the best way, but left himself in God's hands, only praying, "Lord, quicken thou me." Let us consider the various methods by which the Lord can quicken his people. Usually he does it by his word. "Thy word hath quickened me." There are promises in God's word of such effectual restorative power, that, if they be but fed upon, and their nutriment be absorbed into our nature, they will make a dwarf into a giant in the twinkling of an eye; and he who lies faint upon the ground, and cannot move hand or foot, shall mount upon the wings of eagles, and run and not be weary, if but one word out of the mouth of God be applied to him by the Spirit.

Sometimes, however, God uses other instruments, such as affliction. It is wonderful how a little touch of the spur will quicken our sluggish natures. God has ways and means of touching our bone and flesh, and rendering sleep an impossibility in more senses than one. Personal affliction is like tonic medicine, by which our relaxed energies are strung up again; but to this end it must be sanctified, or it will fail. Blessed be God for a flick of his whip; we might else have stumbled in our sleep and fallen. It does good to such sorry jades as we are. I pray that some of you may get a touch of it, for you are dull enough. Just a touch now and then does all of us good; and rest

assured we shall have it too, if we do not keep awake without it, for God loves us too well to withhold his paternal rod.

At the same time, he can quicken us by great mercies. A man may be stirred up to diligence by a sense of gratitude to God for great mercies. I grant you it does not always have that effect; but it ought to do so. Oh, if our hearts were right, it would be sweet to say, "Here is another mercy, another favour from God; this binds me with another cord to his service; I will love him more, and devote myself more intensely to his work."

Christian example, too, sometimes stirs us up. I believe the reading of holy biographies has been exceedingly blessed of God. The life of such a man as McCheyne, or the diary of Brainerd or the story of Whitfield's ministry—such things make us think, "What are we? what are we living for?" Put microscopes upon our eyes, and yet we can hardly see ourselves, we are so little, We are as grasshoppers in their sight, yea, we are as grasshoppers in our own sight. This stimulates us. On the other hand, if you fall in with a number of idle dolts of professors, as sometimes you do, your indignation at them will help to excite you to zeal, or it ought to do so. We have known some who have said, "I am superior to these, at any rate," and therefore congratulating themselves they have gradually sunk down to the same ignominious level; but in a true heart the sluggishness of others is a spur to greater exertion, for such a man says, "Is my Master served in such a beggarly manner as this? then will I serve him with all my heart, to make up for the lack of service in others." It is said that Augustus Cæsar was once asked to a feast by one of his subjects, but the attendance was so dilatory, and the feast so mean, that he rose in disgust, and said he supposed he was invited to be honoured, but he had discovered that it was intended to insult him. Truly in many a congregation of Christians, yea, even of our own denomination, the worship of God is done in such a mean, stingy, dead-and-alive way that it seems as if Christ were asked to the assembly to be insulted rather than to be honoured. Verily such treatment of our Lord is enough to make us weep tears of blood, and then drive us onward to a service hitherto unparalleled in these frigid days.

Doubtless, too, a warm-hearted ministry has much to do with quickening us, and if we have a choice of ministries in any place, we should select not that which tickles the ear most, but that which most enlivens the heart. If there are two ministries to be had, one of which is highly rhetorical and exceedingly pleasing to the intellect, but the other, though lacking in these points, nevertheless appeals to our conscience, arouses our heart, feeds us with spiritual meat, and incites to higher degrees of sanctity, choose *that*, for it is the ministry which God approves.

Under God's blessing, every one of our graces may become a means of enlivening us. For instance, our faith, as it believes the great things of God will be sure to arouse us; our hope, as she looks forward to the bright reward will cause us to labour where otherwise we should have fainted: and love, which is the fore-horse of the team, will draw us to serve Christ with might and main. True love to Jesus, if it come to a great vehemence will quicken the entire spiritual nature, and then will the prayer be answered, "Quicken thou me."

Thus, brethren, you see God has both gentle and rough means of quickening us, but for my part if he will but quicken me, I will make no bargain with him: let him do it as he wills. Do what thou wilt with me, my Lord; only keep me from being lukewarm, cold-hearted, dead and alive. Do make me to be all on fire for thee.

Remember, beloved, that this is a promised blessing. David says, "Quicken thou me according to thy word." You will find that thought repeated in the Psalm. It is a blessing to be pleaded for, for in a former verse David says, "Quicken thou me in thy righteousness," as if he felt that God would not be righteous, would not be keeping his promise, if he did not quicken him. This is a blessing which is always a token of God's lovingkindness wherever it comes. Look at the eighty-eighth verse and the one hundred and fifty-ninth, and you will find them both saying, "Quicken thou me after thy lovingkindness."

III. Our text DESCRIBES THE SPHERE OF RENEWED VIGOUR. "Quicken thou me in *thy way*." I have no business to ask God to quicken me in my own way, no right to ask him to quicken me merely that I may enjoy myself religiously, or be thought to be a very eminent Christian, or be able to sit down and contemplate my own beauties and perfections with self-complacency. Somebody once said to a Christian man, "Pray what faith have you?" Said he, "I have none to boast of." If you see a fellow about who has not a sixpence to bless himself with, if he chances to possess an imitation diamond ring how careful he is to show it. See how he always puts out his finger to let you see it; but he who is worth his millions never thinks of displaying his gewgaws in that fashion. He that has merely a name to be religious is sure to advertise it, but he who is rich towards God is the very man who thinks himself poor, and cries out, "Lord quicken thou me."

Now, what is the path in which we require to be quickened? First, it is in the way of duty in common life. Am I a father—quicken thou me to bring up my children aright. Am I a housewife—Lord quicken thou me that my duties at home may be discharged as in thy fear. Am I a servant or master—Lord, quicken thou me. I have my temptations in my daily calling, quicken me to stand against them; and I have also my daily opportunities for serving thee, quicken me to make use of them.

It means next, "Quicken thou me in sacred activity." Am I a preacher? Lord help me to preach with all my might and with all *thy* might too. Am I a teacher in a school? Lord grant that I may not go to sleep over my children, but may win their souls, being blest by thee with the earnestness which tells upon youthful minds. Have I any other work to do? Am I a deacon or elder of the church? Let me be so ardent in piety, that my fellow members may be excited by my zeal. You have all some work to do for Christ—I hope you have. If you have not, go home and begin; but if you are doing your work, I know your prayer must be, "Quicken thou me in thy way."

Did not David mean, again, quicken me in the way of patient suffering? for I must not forget that there are some whose service for Christ is more honourable even than the service of the worker, but who are very apt to think that Christ considers them useless. Oh dear brother

and sister art thou called to suffer bodily pain? Your work is to bring forth the inexpressibly sweet fruit of patience. Go and pray, "Quicken thou me in thy way." You know the story about poor Betty, who said the Lord had called her to do this and that while she was well, but now, "The Lord had said, 'Betty, go and lie on that bed and cough,'" and said she, "I will do it, for his sake." May you rejoice in the Lord's will even if it causes you to pine, to cough, and to die. Not even the song of the angels is more sweet to God's ear than the resignation and patience which are to be found in the hearts of the sons and daughters of affliction. But you will want great grace for this, my sister; you will want a strong inner life for this, my brother; therefore pray, "Quicken thou me in thy way."

And the same is true of the way of hallowed worship. We want to be quickened there, quickened in private prayer, quickened in public prayer, quickened in our family devotion, quickened in our reading the Scriptures, quickened in our contemplations of divine love, quickened in all forms of worship. We require to be quickened in our growth in grace, in humility, in patience, in hope, in faith, in love, in every good gift. Especially we need to be quickened in communion with our God. Then let us pray the prayer, "Quicken thou me in thy way."

IV. Lastly, the connection of our text DENOTES THAT THERE MAY BE SPECIAL REASONS AND SPECIAL SEASONS FOR THIS PRAYER. Just observe it. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and "Quicken thou me in thy way." You see the connection of the prayer. David is exposed to a temptation: the temptation reaches him through his eyes; he prays God to turn his eyes away from it, and then as a cure for the evil he says, "Quicken thou me.'" Brethren, are you never fascinated by a sin? Whenever you have been conscious of that diabolical fascination it has been time to cry, "'Quicken thou me in thy way.' I see I am weaker than I thought I was; Lord, I was carried away with anger when I thought I had gained a quiet temper at last; Lord, I found my heart going after an evil which I thought I had no relish for. Give me more grace, Good Master. 'Quicken thou me in thy way.'"

A fit time for this prayer is a season of great affliction. The one hundred and seventh verse teaches us that. "I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word." Times of great temptation of spirit and trial of soul should be seasons for praying that God would give us extraordinary grace. When we have been confessing past sloth we should pray for grace to resist it for the future. If God at this time should convince any of us that we have not done one-tenth of what we ought to have done, and that we have been living at a distance from the love of Christ, then the prayer should arise, "Quicken thou me in thy way."

Are we just now called to some extraordinary service? Does the Lord lay upon us a heavy burden for his name? Do not let us shirk it, or say, "I cannot do it." No, "Lord, quicken thou me." Give me more grace, and then I shall be equal to any emergency, for as my days my strength shall be.

This prayer is very suitable to the members of this church, because at this time we have seen so many of the good and excellent among us

taken away. It scarcely seems as if the Lord would leave us any. During their last few months he has continued to sweep away one and another from us, and this week another valuable brother has been borne to the tomb. Surely every one remaining should say, "Lord, quicken thou me." Grant that I may live so that if I also am soon to be removed I shall have finished my course, and have fought the fight right through and gained the crown which grace has promised. Perhaps within the course of another week this black upon my pulpit may wear a third significance, as it has a double one already. From which of us shall it derive its third meaning. Do I stand here to preach in feebleness my last sermon to you? Do my beloved church officers sit around me for the last time? And have I here members of this fellowship who are now upon this last occasion gathered for united worship? Brethren, it may be so. Then let us pray for quickening, that we may live while we live, and waste no precious moment of our scant earthly existence. The needs of our church are very great. If I stood in a harvest field, and saw that the crop needed to be ingathered, and that a labourer was working in it till he fainted again and again, and if I saw him in great feebleness grasping the sickle still, impelled by a brave spirit which kept him to his work, I think I should pray, "Lord, help me to reap too, to go into that mass of standing corn and reap too, for I see thy servant overdone with service." My fellow servants, bought with the same blood, the harvest truly is plenty, but the labourers are few. I entreat you, by the blood and wounds of him who bought you, let not a single one turn away, but rise up and serve God with heart and soul and strength. Ah, we shall soon have to give account for all these things. Within a few short weeks or months we shall stand before his judgment seat whose eyes of fire shall read us through and through. We shall then be called to account for these ungodly ones who sit with us this day. Can we answer for their souls? We are a great church in a great city, and multitudes are dying without knowing Christ; if we do not give them all the help and instruction we can, how shall we answer for it? If standing in this pulpit to preach to crowds I do not stir my soul and preach earnestly, how shall I answer for it? When blood shall be upon these skirts in the day of judgment, the crimson of souls damned through my indolence, how shall I answer for it? Great God, forbid that it should ever be. But it may be so with you as well as with me, each one according to his responsibility and position. I again conjure you by every name that can tell upon your hearts and arouse your consciences, pray to God to quicken you to an ardour of love and an intense diligence of service for his dear and precious name.

Ah, some of you I cannot ask to offer this prayer. I have told you why. Dead souls, how can you pray for life? But I will ask God's people to pray for you, and I will pray for you, that the gospel which I am commanded to preach even to the dead in sin may come with power to your souls. Here it is: "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." The Lord lead you to obey the word. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cix. 25—48.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A HONEYCOMB.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 29TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."—Hebrews xii. 3.

WHEN the Hebrew Christians were suffering dire persecution the apostle could suggest no better support for their faith than this, "Consider him." He bade them look to Jesus, and compare their case with that of their Lord. Such contemplations would prove a sovereign balm for their distressed minds. A consideration of our Lord and Master is the best conceivable stay and support during persecution. Let us look into that fact for a few minutes.

The believer under persecution should remember that he is suffering no strange thing, but is only enduring that which fell upon his Master before him. Should the disciple expect to be above his Lord? "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household." If they had received Christ they would have received us, but since they reject both Christ and his sayings, the followers of Christ must expect that both their persons and their doctrines will be lightly esteemed.

Remember that in addition to his being our Master, Jesus is also God. Shamefully unrighteous was the opposition of mankind to God, whom by all reasons of right and justice they were bound to reverence: yet he endured, with almighty patience, the contradiction of sinners against himself. A word from his lips would have withered them, but, like a sheep before her shearers, he was dumb. One glance of his eye of fire would have consumed their spirits, but that eye distilled a tear instead. Ye are but men, is it much that men should mock at you? If God himself, in the person of his dear Son, has endured the opposition of sinners, who are you, Oh sons of men, that you should wonder, much less should murmur, when you are reviled for Jesu's sake?

Remember, too, that our dear Lord and Master was perfectly innocent. It was a cruel thing that he should be opposed who had done no harm to anyone. "For which of these works do you stone me"? said

he,—a plaintive question, as much as if he had said, "I have healed your sick, I have fed your hungry, I have raised your dead, and do you thus requite me! Are stones the only testimonials of your appreciation?" They called him a drunken man, yet well we know he was temperance itself. They said he had a devil, though he was the Lord of angels. They charged him with treason, and yet he was himself the King of kings and Lord of all. Now, brethren and sisters, in us there is much that is evil, and when men speak evil of us falsely we may say within ourselves, "Ah, had they known me better they might have truthfully found fault with me in some other direction." Ye are not innocent, beloved, oftentimes ye bring the rebuke upon yourselves; and the contradiction of sinners against your religion is due to your own fault quite as well as to the world's opposition to the truth which ye love. Therefore if he, the spotless One, endured, should not ye endure who are so far from innocent? Should not ye be willing for his sake to suffer persecution?

Remember, too, the loving mission upon which our Master came. He came into this world on purpose to save men. He had no sinister motive, nor even a secondary aim. The glory of God in the salvation of lost souls was all he lived for, and yet for all that sinners were infuriated against him, and opposed him with might and main. Now, the good ye can confer upon them is slender enough compared with the rich gifts with which the Master's hands were laden. Ye come, it is true, to tell them of a Saviour, but ye cannot save them. Ye bring glad tidings of good things, but ye are only tiding-bearers of the good things your Master actually brought. If they persecuted him who gave his blood for their redemption, it is not wonderful if you, who can only tell what he has done, should bear some of the reproaches that fell upon him. We remember, dear friends, how bitter were the reproaches that assailed him, how the enmity of man put forth all its cruel force. They were not content with slandering him in life, they must needs hurry him away to death. Reproach broke his heart, and he was full of heaviness; thus they tortured his soul; and ye have not forgotten their cruelties to him in Pilate's hall, where the mental and physical agonies were blended. Ye cannot forget the nailing to the cross, and the scorn which saluted him in the midst of his dying grief. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. What have ye endured compared with his? As the poet standing upon the desolate mounds of ruined Rome considering the death-throes of an empire, said, "What are our petty griefs? Let me not number mine." So may ye say, "What are the sufferings of any of the saints compared with the infinite griefs of the eternal Son of God." His was suffering indeed. "Consider him, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds."

Yet reflect, beloved, amid all these sufferings, our Lord's temper remained unruffled. He spoke strong words against hypocrisy and falsehood wherever he beheld them. He spared neither Scribe nor Pharisee, but in those stern denunciations not a single atom of personal anger was blended. He did not denounce them in resentment of their attacks upon himself, but because they deserved to be denounced, and were in themselves too vile to be tolerated. No personal animosity ever ruffled the serenity of our great Master's

spirit. Moreover, he was never moved to take the slightest revenge upon his foes; even for those who nailed him to the wood, he had no return but the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And, as he had no vengeance against them, so they exerted no evil influence upon him. He persevered in his life-work just as much as if he had never been opposed. Like the sun that goeth on in its strength whether there be clouds to hide it or whether it shine out of the blue serene, Christ continued in his heavenward way; coming out of his chamber full of love to his spouse like a bridegroom girded for the race he pursued his mighty journey, tarrying not till he had fulfilled his course. Oh, how strengthening is this contemplation! Let us consider him and reflect, that by reason of his sufferings, and his patience, and his forgiveness, and his perseverance, he achieved a triumph over evil, which was in effect a complete victory of righteousness over sin. If he could have been ruffled he had been defeated, if he could have been angered he had been overthrown, if he could have been stayed in his progress, then had he not been victorious; but he bore and bore and bore again, he suffered and he suffered and he suffered still; like the anvil that replies not to the hammer, he yet wore out those hammers by his patience. Brethren, consider this, and suffer yourselves with a patience like your Master's. Consider Jesus, and push on in the allotted path of holy service, just as he did. Consider him, and look forward with expectancy to the joy of triumphing over evil, for Christ will in you get the victory over sin again, in you he will again be crowned with many crowns, and in you again his cross shall become the symbol and weapon of victory.

But, now, I must confess I did not take this text with the view of preaching from it as it stands, but from a light which breaks out of it. We have given you an outline of what could have been said upon the text, but the thought occurred to me if the consideration of Christ be a most effectual medicine to the persecuted, so as to prevent their being weary or faint in their mind, doubtless the self-same sacred balm would be beneficial to all other cases of spiritual distress; and as I thought of all the diseases of God's people, and like a physician tried this prescription upon them, I discovered that it was equally suitable and effectual in every case. So I thought I would speak this Sabbath morning to those souls which most want our care, namely, to those who are seeking Jesus, and longing after salvation, but are filled with doubts and despondencies, and I will say to them "*consider him.*" I am persuaded, beloved, if I am enabled by God's Spirit to lead any seeking soul to "consider him," I shall also lead that soul into liberty. I believe this topic will be the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound. I feel for some of you that God has set before you this morning an open door which no man can shut, and my prayer shall be offered over every syllable that I utter, that God may lead you through that open door at this very moment. So that not twenty or a hundred, but thousands of you may find Christ, and be saved with an everlasting salvation. I know the medicine has power in it if God the Holy Spirit will but apply it.

I shall now speak to the seeking sinner, taking him by the hand and appealing to him in simple but earnest language.

Thou that seekest salvation I say unto thee, in the name of the living God, consider Christ Jesus, the Son of God, the only Saviour of man.

And do this first to meet thine own consideration of thy SIN. You are awakened enough to know that you have sinned against God. Though a little while ago sin seemed a trifle, you now know that it is a terrible thing, a deadly thing, and the thought oppresses your spirit that your sin deserves the wrath of God, that it must be punished, that God would not be a just moral Governor if he were to pardon you absolutely: he must take vengeance upon your inventions and punish you for your iniquity. Now I am glad that you have considered your sin and the heinousness of it; but, poor soul, let me take you by the hand and say to you, *consider him*—the Saviour, Christ Jesus. For if you will bethink yourself concerning him you will remember that God has been just and has laid the sin of his people upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It was impossible that sin should be wiped out with no remark from God, but he has been pleased to accept a substitute in the person of his only begotten Son, who could lawfully be a substitute because he is the head of his people, and it was natural that in their fall he should take an interest as being to them what Adam was to the whole human race. Now, the Lord need not punish thee, Oh sinner, for sin, for he has punished Jesus Christ in the stead of all believing sinners; he need not visit thee with stripes, for the stripes due to thy sin, if thou believest in Jesus, were laid upon another's back; thine iniquities were gathered all together in one mighty load and then placed upon the shoulders of Jesus Christ, the great scape-goat for sin. Does not that remove distress from thy mind? If thou considerest thy sin consider also the five wounds, consider the bloody sweat, consider the tortured person of the immaculate Christ, who was God at the same time that he was man, and say unto thy soul, "If Jesus died in thy stead, there is a sufficient recompense made to the injured honour of Almighty God, so that he can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly."

But there rises in thy mind this thought, "My sin has placed me in a miserable position, for I am a sinner, and being a sinner I must be obnoxious to the anger of God. It is not possible that a pure God could permit me to dwell in his presence, for he cannot look upon iniquity. How can I hope for acceptance before God when I am defiled?" Now hearken, soul. Thou art a sinner, but "consider him," ask thyself what is Jesus Christ? I speak with reverence of his name, as our Redeemer, what is he apart from sinners? Is not his name "Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." If there were no sinners, what could be the value of his name? It would be an empty sounding title without a meaning. How could he save if there were no lost ones to be saved? He could only be called a Saviour by way of compliment and fancy. Bethink thee, what did Jesus come from heaven for if he had not a relation to sinners? "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." He came for nothing if he does not find sinners and save them; and if you, and such as you, have no right to look to Jesus, then what did he come to earth for? If there be a righteous man here who has no

sin, Christ has nothing to do with you, you will perish without a Saviour; but if you are a sinner, you are the kind of person that he came to save, and the fact of your knowing that you are a sinner should give you comfort.

Look at the characters of Christ—"consider him." Is he not a priest? And what is a priest for, but to make propitiation for the sins of the people? Is not our Lord described as a sacrifice for sin? But to what end is there a bloody sacrifice if there be no sin to put away? Jesus is our advocate. What says the apostle? "If any man sin, we have an advocate." Who wants an advocate with God, but the man who has offended? Jesus is an intercessor, too, but who wants him to intercede for him if he be innocent? He maketh intercession for the sins of his people. You see, then, if you will consider him, that as a poor man is needful before there can be an almsgiver, as a disconsolate soul is needful before a comforter can exercise his office, so a sinner is necessary before a Saviour can be what he is ordained to be. Jesus needs your sinnership that he may exercise his sacred craft upon it. Put a surgeon down amidst men who are never sick, and what is there for him to do? Tell a physician that in a certain city no one is ever ill, and he will take himself off by the next train. If there were no sinners what use would a propitiation be? Therefore as you consider him, though your sense of sin will not vanish, your despair about it will be driven quite away.

"Yes, but," saith another, "while I have been considering my sin I have been stunned altogether by a sense of its greatness. Oh, sir, mine has not been mere verbal sin, I have committed crimson transgressions of which it were a shame to speak. I have defiled myself by actual crimes which I cannot efface from my memory." Be it so, but I bring thee my one remedy, "*Consider him.*" What sort of a Saviour is Jesus Christ, a little Saviour or a great one? Is he not the Son of God, and himself God? What need of a divine person to be a propitiation for limited sin? It was the infinity of sin that required the Godhead itself to become incarnate, in order that human guilt might be put away. If thou sayest, "I have but little sin;" I tell thee Christ will have nothing to do with thee. He came not from heaven to be a physician to a pin's prick on a man's finger which will heal of itself, but he is a physician who delights to heal putrifying sores and gaping wounds, and incurable diseases. And thou, great, big, black, devilish sinner, thou art just the sort of man that Christ delights to operate upon, for in thee will he show his power, his mercy, his grace, his sovereignty. There is room to display the infinity of his mercy in such a one as thou art. Therefore, be not cast down, be not faint and weary in thy seeking after him, but come at once and close in with him who is mighty to save.

"Yes," said another, "but in turning over my sin I see the peculiarity of it. I believe my case is one by itself. I do not think another man could have committed the sin I have done under the circumstances, and with the peculiar aggravations." Be it so. Thou art a unique sinner, but "*consider him*" for he is a unique Saviour. Was there ever such a one as Jesus? Thou art a wonderful sinner, but his name is also called Wonderful. If thou art a sinner of such a class, that, if

thou be saved, all the angels will throng the streets to see thee come to heaven and point at thee, and say, "Behold a monstrous sinner, saved"; I say, if it be so thou wilt bring all the more glory to Christ, thou wilt only make his name the more famous through every heavenly street. But I tell thee, however much by thyself thou mayest be Christ will meet thee. If thou hast outsoared all others in the daring flights of thy sin, Jesus has gone beyond thee in the flights of his mercy. Though thou shouldst have gone as near the gates of hell as possible, and have imitated the devil in his worst qualities, yet the Redeemer is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. He is a Saviour, and a great one. If thou canst ever find such a Saviour as Christ, then I will ask thee to find such a sinner as thyself; but since thou art a nonpareil sinner, since thou must say of thyself, "*Ne plus ultra*," I will say the same of Jesus,—there is none beyond him. He stands alone and by himself, and so the sinner and the Saviour are well matched. Let thy fears be hushed to sleep, and put thy trust in him.

Now, the same precious sentence will be useful to the seeking soul, if its contemplation should have taken another shape. I can well believe that some of you are grievously oppressed with the sense of the greatness of GOD. You have lived for years negligent of the God who created you and supplied your wants, but now you have been awakened and aroused to the fact that there is a God, a God whom you have despitefully entreated, whom you have shamefully disregarded; and you are shocked to find that it is so, for now you have a sense of the greatness of God, and you are afraid that he will crush you. You know the justice of God, and you are sure that he must avenge the injuries you have done to his holy law, and, therefore, you go about every day with a dreadful sound in your ears, crying, "Whither shall I go from his presence, and how shall I escape from his vengeance?" You are surrounded with God, and in him you live and move and have your being, and this everywhere present God is your enemy, for you have made him so by your rebellions against him.

Now as a cure for all this, I have to say to you "*consider him*"—Christ Jesus. You are afraid of God because he hates sin. Your fears are based on truth. God hates sin infinitely. If there were only one grain of sin in the whole universe, he would burn it to ashes to get rid of that grain of sin, for it is such a detestable thing in his sight. But now consider Christ Jesus; for sin was laid on him. If thou wilt come now, and put thy trust in Jesus, thou mayest be sure that thy sin was laid on Christ, and the wrath of God concerning sin was spent upon him. The vials of Jehovah's indignation were poured upon the devoted head of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. God hates sin, but he will not hate thee, for thou hast no sin if thou believest in Jesus, seeing thy sin is transferred to thy surety and laid upon Christ, and thou art clean.

Ah, but thou savest, "He is such a holy God, how can I approach him?" Well, I will tell thee the most blessed secret out of heaven. It is this—thou canst, by faith, put on the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and when thou hast it on thee thou wilt be as holy in the sight of God as Christ is holy. Did not Jesus keep the law? What

need was there that he should? He needed not to have become a servant to his father. He has a righteousness to spare, and he gives it to us, for he is made unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." When a soul puts on the righteousness of Christ by faith, even the all-seeing eye of God cannot see a flaw in that righteousness. Adam in the garden had a perfect righteousness, but then it was only a human one; you and I, when we believe in Jesus, have a perfect righteousness which is divine—the righteousness of the Eternal Son of God himself, and so we can come to God as if we had been perfectly innocent, and stand on terms of full familiarity with the thrice holy One.

"Ah," saith one, "there is good cheer in all this, but still I have some dread remaining, for God is infinitely great." It is true, it is true, but I would have thee "*consider him*," for recollect, the God thou hast to do with is not God as seen on Sinai, or rather as obscurely heard amidst the dense darkness of the trembling mountain, but thou hast to do with God in Christ Jesus, and therefore "*consider him*." Now bethink thee for a minute. Jesus is a strong God it is true. Do you not see him walking the waters of the sea? But why does he pause in the midst of his wondrous marchings over the waves? It is to stretch out his hand and save Peter from sinking, who had said, "Lord save me, or I perish." The strength of God shall do the same for thee; as thou art sinking and ready to perish, the omnipotent God will put out his hand and snatch thee from the waves of fire, and deliver thy soul from destruction.

Consider Christ Jesus a moment as a strong God, and how he uses his strength. He walks down the streets where the sick folk lie in their beds, and does he trample on them and crush out the last spark of life from those poor wretches? No, but he touches this one and an eye is opened, and he puts his finger on another and an ear is unstopped, he lays his hand on the dead and they arise. Oh, yes, and he will do this to thee. Be thankful for a mighty God, for in Christ Jesus the omnipotence of God will only come to heal thy woes. See this omnipotent One take the loaves and the fishes in his hands and break them, and as he breaks them they multiply till all those thousands are fed out of one basket full of barley loaves and small fishes:—he will feed thy soul with heavenly bread to the full. His greatness will reveal itself in supplying thy great necessities, and blessing thee greatly. Thou wilt see it so, if thou wilt consider Jesus.

"Till God in human flesh I see
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred three,
Are terrors to my mind.

But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins,
His name forbids my slavish fears,
His grace forgives my sins."

So I have used the remedy thus far. I dare say I shall be a little tedious—the doctor is always tedious when he has many wounds to bind up.

It may be that some soul here is saying, "You have not touched my difficulty yet. I am troubled about sin, and I am troubled about God, but still my greatest anxiety is this—I know that if I could believe, my sins would be pardoned, but I am perplexed with UNBELIEF, and I am sore distressed because of the HARDNESS OF MY HEART, which will not let me repent." Come, then, soul, and "*consider him.*"

First, thou sayest, "I have little or no faith;" then "consider him." Did Jesus ever stipulate for great faith before he healed a soul? What trembling faith he accepted in the days of his flesh! The poor leper said, "Lord if thou wilt *thou* canst make me clean." You can get as far as that, cannot you? And Jesus Christ said, "I will, be thou clean." A poor woman came into the crowd, and was afraid to face the Master, but she crept behind him and touched the hem of his garment, and stole a cure, for she said, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made whole," and Jesus did not rebuke her, but he said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace." So Jesus Christ loves little faith, therefore thou, poor Much-afraid, and thou, Despondency, "*consider him,*" and his gentleness towards the timid and trembling, and let thy fears be gone.

But thou sayest, "Ah, I am afraid, I have no faith at all." Then, beloved, "consider him," and among other matters consider well how he deserves thy faith. Tell me, what did Jesus ever do that thou shouldst doubt him? He says he will save thee if thou will trust him. Point to one promise he has broken. I challenge thee, yea, I challenge all the world to point to one word that ever fell from his lips and was not fulfilled. That dear and precious Saviour is truth itself. I feel I can trust him, and whenever I do not trust him it is because I have not considered him. The sight of him makes me feel that I would rush into his arms. What, not trust him who "bears the earth's huge pillars up?" I must trust him! Son of God and Son of Man, I see both thy strength and thy tenderness, and I must rely upon thee. I pray the man who feels that he cannot believe, to consider Christ Jesus. Think of him in the garden; think of him on the cross. Will not his death suffice? Think of him as rising from the dead and pleading before the eternal throne.

> "Venture on him, venture wholly,
> Let no other trust intrude,
> Sure this Saviour
> Can do helpless sinners good."

Well, then, suppose that after all you should still say, "But I find unbelief my trouble still," then I ask you to recollect that he was exalted on high on purpose that he might bestow the gift of faith and repentance. Even while he was here on earth, his disciples prayed, "Lord, increase our faith," and you may without doubt pray to him to give you faith. And you, who mourn a rocky heart, you may say, "Lord, thou art exalted on high to give repentance to Israel, give repentance to me:" for Jesus can touch your heart and make it tender in a moment. Only let that nail-pierced hand be laid upon thy cold, petrified heart, and it will become warm and instinct with heavenly life. If thou lookest to thyself to find repentance, thou wilt look long enough, but if thou wilt look to him, is it not written "They shall look on him whom they have

pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his first born?" A sight of Christ breeds repentance in the heart. Jesus looked on Peter; Peter's eyes were dry till then, but Peter saw that look, and it melted Peter's heart; right through his nature it pierced like some mighty gleam of a ten-fold sun, in a moment it pierced the iceberg of his nature and dissolved his soul. One look at Jesus will melt a heart of stone. "Consider him" then. Come to the point. You cannot believe nor repent, but *he* can give you both. If you urge yourself to these, you will often make a mistake, and make yourself more unbelieving and more impenitent than before; but if you go to him for every grace that brings you nigh, and ask that without money, he will give you everything, he will freely bestow them upon you. If you let him be Saviour from top to bottom, from beginning to end, if you will just go to him as helpless, lost and ruined, and confide yourself entirely to him, you shall find he will not and cannot fail you in this the time of your necessity. Thus you see, considering him gets rid of those troubles. May the Spirit of God prove it to be so!

Perhaps YOUR OWN INSIGNIFICANCE causes you to doubt. You complain and say, "I cannot think Christ would save me. I am nobody; I am mean, poor, obscure." Dear friend, consider Jesus. Did he ever fawn at the great ones' feet? Did he preach in the royal chapel, and there utter soft nothings, fit for the ears of kings and queens. You know he did not. He wore the smock-frock of the peasantry and called fishermen to be his apostles; thus pouring contempt on princes, for "not many great men, after the flesh, not many mighty are called." He hath chosen the base things of this world, and the things that are not hath God chosen to bring to nought the things that are.

"Ah," saith one, "but I mean I have no gift, or knowledge." Then "consider him," and let me bring him before your eye. I see him standing with uplifted hands, exclaiming, "Father I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." Does not that settle that question once for all? I am sure it ought to do so.

"Ah," saith one, "but I am so unworthy." Yes, and wilt thou tell me where Christ was accustomed to seek out the worthy ones? Did he not go and touch blind beggars' eyes who were nothing but beggars, and had no recommendation but poverty? Did he not bless those who had no claim by way of righteousness? Does mercy ever ask for merit? Does it not, on the contrary, seek for misery? If an angel of mercy hovered over this congregation, poising himself in mid air, I should know that he did not come with mercy to those of you who are good and have no sin—why should he come to insult you? But if there be a broken-hearted sinner here, I know that the angel has a gracious word for him, from the heart of him who delighteth in mercy. Do not say I am a nobody, and am therefore forgotten. Christ Jesus loves nobodies; he delights to pick up those whom society throws away—the very off-scourings and sweepings are his choice. Solomon built his temple of cedar, but our Lord builds his temple with the meanest woods in the forest. Any jeweller can make a precious thing of gold, but Jesus makes diamonds out of dross, and crowns out of clay.

Yes, but still, perhaps, I have not met the peculiar distress of some; and so let me try again. "Ah," saith one, "but I feel my POWERLESSNESS for everything that is good; I am sure if I am saved I cannot help in it." Ah, poor soul, it is strange that ever we should think we could help the Lord to save us. Could you have helped in creation? If you had been there when God was making the world, would you have offered to help him? When he said, "Let there be light," would you have rushed forward with a match and said, "Permit me to add my little spark?" It is insulting to think of such a thing. But salvation is a greater work than creation. Stand back, thou impertinent flesh and blood! thou canst only hinder the great work. God does not need thy help. Abase thyself, and he will glorify himself in thy salvation.

"Still," saith one, "I feel so feeble in everything I try to do. I tried to pray, but I could not." What did you do? "I fretted because I could not pray." Well, you prayed much better than if you had thought you had prayed; for he who groans because he cannot pray has prayed the best prayer in the world. The poor publican did not say much, but when he smote upon his breast, even if he had not added the recorded words, he prayed; that smiting on his bosom meant the true prayer of his soul, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Ah," saith one, "I have been trying to overcome sin lately, and I have been beaten." Thou shalt overcome by the blood of the Lamb, but all thine own warring against sin will certainly end in defeat. Let the sword of the Lord and of Gideon be laid bare, and the Midianites will soon be put to the rout; but except it be the sword of the Lord there will be no routing thy foes. "Consider him," and have hope. "Oh, but if I have any love to Christ it is so little. If I have any faith it is almost unbelief. If I have any life it is but a flicker. How can I be saved?" Now, soul, once for all have done with all this talk. Thy salvation is in Christ, and not in thee. Do not say, "I have little strength:" confess you have none at all, and then you are near the truth. Do not say, "I have little life;" confess that you are dead by nature, and you have hit the mark. Do not say, "I have little virtue;" say, "All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin." When you reach the bottom you cannot fall lower, and that is the place where you ought to be, and Jesus will never meet you till you come to the lowest point. Your extremity is his opportunity; when you are a beggarly bankrupt, and cannot pay half a farthing in the pound, then all Christ's richest treasures shall be yours; but if you have a little to add to help up the Saviour, just so that you may have a side glance at the glory, he will have nothing to do with you. He wants you, but he does not want yours; he wants your emptiness to fill it, but he wants nothing of your own to increase his fulness.

Now, I must hasten on for time fails me. Peradventure, I have some here who say, "My case lies out of your track this morning, for I am the subject of very fierce Satanic TEMPTATIONS. I have lately been met with such blasphemous thoughts and horrible suggestions that I can scarcely conceive any other human being has ever been subjected to them." Now, at once "consider him." He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." "We have a high priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities," I want you to recollect

this, and so to "consider him." Now, I know that if a preacher of the gospel has had no temptations nobody ever goes to him with questions of conscience; but if a man of God has been led through great adversity and soul trouble, all the distressed and afflicted people in the neighbourhood are sure to fly to him because he can sympathise with them. Now, our dear Redeemer can sympathise with you who are tempted of the devil, for he was forty days in the wilderness tempted of Satan too. Go to Him. "But I am afraid of the temptations I shall have in years to come." Are you? Then "consider him," for "he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." What a choice word that was of his to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Oh, poor soul, consider Jesus, and remember that if all the devils in hell were to tempt you, and you had but Jesus Christ present with you, you need no more be afraid than if the dogs in the streets barked at your heels when all their teeth were drawn. Jesus has broken the devil's teeth by the power of his intercession. He has power to howl at us but he cannot bite us; he worries whom he can't devour with a malicious joy, but the Lord has smitten our enemy upon the cheek bone, and by one tremendous blow of his pierced hand he has broken the teeth of the oppressor.

I hear yet another cry. "Come here," says one, "I have something to whisper in your ear I can hardly tell. My trouble is about my INWARD CORRUPTION. Oh, if ever there be an unclean heart in all the world I have it, it is like some foul pond which bubbles up with putrid gas. My inmost nature is filled with all manner of filthiness and iniquity, like a mud volcano, which pours forth a horrid stream. Oh, sir, my heart is abominable; a cage of unclean birds is nothing to it, it is a den of devils." Well, well, "consider him." You remember how he came into the temple, and there were the buyers and sellers, with their bullocks and sheep and doves. I have often marvelled at the ease with which he drove them forth. He had not even a rope with him, but only a few small cords, but he began straightway to lay about him, and Oh, how they ran. Those money-grubbers, who would not have lost a shekel for their lives, saw their gold and silver spilt on the ground, while the bullocks and the sheep fled from the holy place, and the doves fluttered out into the air. Let Christ come into your heart, and he will soon drive out the buyers and sellers, ay, and the old dragon himself. Remember, too, that Jesus is a creator. He made the heavens and the earth,—cannot he create you anew? Is it not said, "He that sat upon the throne said, behold I make all things new." Consider his omnipotent power; having given you a new heart, can he not make you completely holy? Oh, think not so continually of your sin and sinfulness and proneness to transgression, but think of Christ, almighty to save, and whether you sink or swim cast yourself upon him; lost or saved, come and cling to his cross this morning, and I warrant you not one of you shall perish, but eternal life shall be the portion of every man that rests in him.

Still somebody says, "I am troubled about THE THREE LAST THINGS; I am afraid of *death*, and I am afraid of *judgment*, and I am afraid

of *hell*." Afraid of death? Well; but if thou wilt but trust the Son of God who died for sinners, thou needest never be afraid to die. Thy little child, when she has run about, and wearied herself, and wants to sleep, is she afraid to fall asleep in mother's arms, with her head on mother's breast? And thou, dear child of God, when thou art wearied with thy work, thou shalt go and lay thy head on Jesus' bosom and fall asleep, and it shall be just as easy, and just as sweet, as for thy little ones to sleep on thy bosom.

"But I am afraid of *judgment*," says one. Judgment: but thy judgment is past already. Thy sins were judged in Christ, and punished in Christ, if thou believest in him. The sins of all believers were brought before the bar of judgment and condemned and broken on the wheel in Christ. Let us go back to that famous passage by Paul for a minute; he pictures God's chosen people standing before the throne, and he cries "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Who is afraid of judgment when nobody can lay anything to his charge? And then he goes on to say "Who is it that condemneth?" None can condemn but the judge; and who is he? It is Christ that died, and can he that died for us condemn us? Impossible, he cannot belie himself. So you need not be afraid of judgment.

"But I am afraid of *hell*," saith one. Ah, and there is good cause to fear it. Fear him who can cast both body and soul into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear him." But you need not fear hell if you trust in Jesus, for Christ has suffered the punishment of your sin, and as far as you are concerned hell is not. There are no flames of wrath for you, they spent themselves upon the Saviour. When the Jew laid his sin-offering on the altar, and the fire consumed it, the sinful Jew stood there and said, "That bullock stands for me." When it was all burned, he said, "My sins are burned. And when they took the ashes into an unclean place and utterly consumed them," he said, "my sin is put away, they have put it outside the camp, it is consumed for ever." So when we "consider him," even our dear Lord Jesus on the cross, we see him there a complete sacrifice, the fire of God roasting and burning him up, consuming his reins within him till he is utterly consumed as a sacrifice, and there our sin was annihilated. Every believer may know that there his sin ceased to be, for it is written, "He hath finished transgression. He hath made an end of sin, and hath brought in an everlasting righteousness."

I do not want to leave off when I have such a subject as this, but I must; only as I leave off it shall be with this earnest prayer that every seeking sinner here may believe in Jesus at once. Oh, weary one, why dost thou not repose upon him? Wanderer, thou wilt never find rest till thou dost come to Jesus! Seeker, vain are thy seekings if thou wilt not have my Lord! Trembler, thy tremblings themselves are to be trembled at, if they keep thee from the cross! There is the Saviour, to be had without money and without price; he is preached to thee. Believe him: that is, trust him and live for ever! The Lord bless you now, and constrain you of his mercy so to do for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews xii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PARACLETE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."—John xiv. 16.

THE unspeakable gift of the Son of God was followed up by the equally priceless gift of the Holy Ghost. Must it not be confessed by us that we think far less of the Holy Spirit than we should? I am sure we do not exalt the Saviour too much, nor is he too often the subject of our meditations; but at the same time, we give to the Holy Spirit a very disproportionate place, even as compared with the Redeemer. I fear that we even grieve the Spirit by our neglect of him.

Let me invite your devout contemplations to the special work of the Holy Spirit. Such an invitation is necessary. The subject has not grown stale, for it too seldom occupies our thoughts. We have not been unduly engrossed with honouring the Spirit of God; for this is a fault seldom or never committed. We have met with uninstructed persons who have glorified the love of Jesus beyond that of the Father, and there are others so occupied with the decrees of the Father as to cast the work of the Son into the background; but very few and far between must be those believers who have dwelt upon the doctrine of the Holy Spirit beyond its proper measure and degree. The mistake has almost invariably been made in the opposite direction.

The personal name of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is "the Spirit," or the "Holy Spirit," which words describe his nature as being a pure, spiritual, immaterial existence, and his character as being in himself and in his workings pre-eminently holy. We commonly also speak of him as the "Holy Ghost," but the name is now an erroneous one. The word "ghost" was the same as "spirit" in years gone by, when the present translation of the Bible was made, but it does not popularly signify "spirit" now; superstition has degraded the word from its elevated meaning, and it might be as well perhaps if the word were dropped altogether and we confined ourselves to the more accurate word, "Holy Spirit." The term "Holy Spirit"

is his personal title, and we have in this verse his official title: he is in the English version called the "Comforter," but the word used in the original, upon which we will meditate this morning, has a much wider range of meaning. The word is Παρακλητος; we used it just now in our hymn, englishing it into "Paraclete":—

"Cheer our desponding hearts,
Thou heavenly Paraclete;
Give us to lie, with humble hope,
At our Redeemer's feet."

Now, it is true that the name "Comforter" is a fair translation from some points of view, but it rather translates a corner of the word than the whole of it. It is a light which really streams from the text, but it is one of the seven prismatic colours rather than the combined light of the very instructive and wonderful word Paraclete. Understand, then, that we have now to consider this morning the official title of the Holy Spirit; may we be filled with loving reverence while we study his gracious work and his official name.

I. First, this morning, I shall try to EXPLAIN HOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS THE PARACLETE. The word Paraclete is so full, that it is extremely difficult to convey to you all its meaning. It is like those Hebrew words which contain so much in a small compass. It is sternly and even primitively sublime in its simplicity, yet it comprehends great things. Literally, it signifies "*called to*" or "*called beside*" another to aid him. It is synonomous verbally, though not in sense, with the Latin word *advocatus*, a person called in to speak for us by pleading our cause. Yet, as we have come to use the word "advocate" in a different sense, that word, although it would, like that of "comforter," convey a part of the meaning, would not contain it all. Paraclete is wider than "advocate" and wider than "comforter." I think the meaning of the word "Paraclete" might be put under the two headings of one "called to," and one "calling to." One called to, that is, to come to our aid, to help our infirmities, to suggest, to advocate, to guide, and so on; and one who in consequence thereof, for our benefit, calls to us; for some see in it the idea of monitor, and certainly the blessed Paraclete is our teacher, remembrancer, incentive, and comforter. His work as one called in to help us consists very largely in his strengthening us by admonition, by instruction, by encouragement, and by those works which would come under the head of a teacher, or a comforter. Paraclete is a word too extensive in meaning to be exchanged for any one word in any language. It is most comprehensive, and we shall hope not so much to interpret as to paraphrase it in the first head of our sermon this morning.

Let us take all the passages in John xiv. xv. and xvi. which refer to this title, and study them with care. From the first, which is our text, we learn that the Holy Spirit, as the Paraclete, is to be to us all that Jesus was to his disciples. Read the text, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you *another* Comforter;" plainly teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ is the first Paraclete, and that the Holy Spirit is a second Paraclete, occupying the same position as the living Jesus did. It would not be easy to describe all that Jesus was to his disciples when

he dwelt among them. If we called him their "guide, and counsellor, and friend," we should but have begun to catalogue his kindnesses. What a valiant leader is to an army, when his very presence inspires them with valour, when his wisdom and tact conduct them to certain victory, and when his influence over them nerves and strengthens them in the day of battle;—all that, and more, was Jesus Christ to his disciples. What the shepherd is to the sheep, the sheep being foolish, and the shepherd alone wise; the sheep being defenceless, and the shepherd strong to protect them; the sheep being without power to provide for themselves in any degree, and the shepherd able to give them all they require;—all that was Jesus Christ to his people. You see Socrates in the midst of his pupils, and you observe at once that the great philosopher is the factotum of his school; but still some follower of Socrates may improve upon what he teaches. Now, when you see Jesus, you observe at once that all his disciples are but as little children compared with their Master, and that the school would cease at once if the great Teacher were gone. He is not only the Founder but the Finisher of our system. Jesus is to them not only the doctor but the doctrine; "He is the way, and the truth, and the life." The disciple of Christ feels Jesus to be inexpressibly precious. He does not know how many uses Christ can be put to, but this he knows—Christ is all in all to him. As the Orientals say of the palm tree, that every fragment of it is of use, and there is scarcely any domestic arrangement into which the palm tree in some form or other does not enter, even so Jesus Christ is good for everything to his people, and there is nothing that they have to do or feel or know, that is good or excellent, but Jesus Christ enters into it. What would that little company of disciples have been as they went through the streets of Jerusalem without their Lord? Conceive him absent and no other Paraclete to fill his place, and you see no longer a powerful band of teachers equipped to revolutionise the world, but a company of fishermen, without intelligence and without influence, a band which in a short time will melt under the influence of unbelief and cowardice. Christ was all in all to his people while he was here. Now, all that Jesus was, the Spirit of God is now to the church. He is "another Paraclete to abide with us for ever." If there be this day any power in the church of God, it is because the Holy Spirit is in the midst of her. If she be able to work any spiritual miracles, it is through the might of his indwelling. If there be any light in her instruction, if there be any life in her ministry, if there be any glory gotten to God, if there be any good wrought among the sons of men, it is entirely because the Holy Spirit is still with her. The entire weight of influence of the church as a whole, and every Christian in particular, cometh from the abiding presence of the sacred Paraclete. And brethren, we shall do well to treat the Holy Spirit as we would have treated Christ had he been yet among us. Our Lord's disciples told him their troubles; we must trust the Comforter with ours. Whenever they felt that they were baffled by the adversary, they fell back upon their Leader's power; so must we call in the aid of the Holy Spirit. When they needed guidance they sought direction from Jesus; we also must seek and abide by the Spirit's leadings. When, knowing what to do, they felt themselves weak for the accomplishment of it, they waited

upon their Master for strength; and so must we upon the Spirit of all grace. Treat the Holy Spirit with the love and tender respect which are due to the Saviour, and the Spirit of God will deal with you as the Son of God did with his disciples.

Now, beloved, we must pass on in our review of the passages of Scripture which relate to the Paraclete, and remember they are only five. We know that the Holy Spirit comforts the people of God by the mere fact of his presence and indwelling. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete that he may abide with you for ever." "For," says the seventeenth verse, "he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Beloved, I have said that the mere fact of the presence of the Holy Spirit is comfort to the saints, and is it not? Jesus has not left you orphans, oh ye his chosen friends; he has gone, but he has left an equally divine substitute, the Holy Spirit; and if at this moment you do not feel his power, if you are even crying out under a sense of your own natural deadness, yet is it not a comfort to you that there is a Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you at this present time? Ye are not required to bring down the Holy Spirit from heaven by praying—

> "Come Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
> With all thy quickening powers."

He has come down from heaven, and has never gone back again; he dwells in his church perpetually, and is not to be brought from on high. He is lawfully to be called upon to work in us, but he is always here. "Oh," say you, "then I must have hope, for if the Spirit of God be in me, I know that he will expel my sin. If I were alone, and had to fight my spiritual battles unhelped, I might despair; but if it be true that the eternal God himself, in the majesty of his omnipotence, dwells within my bosom, then, my heart, be of good comfort and be encouraged! The Lord who is in thee is mightier than all they that are against thee." Satan may roar, the lusts of the flesh may rebel, and the temptations of the world may assail, but if the Holy Spirit be really resident within the believer's heart, then perfection will one day be attained, and the last enemy will be trodden down. It is consolation to us to know that the Holy Spirit dwelleth in us, and he deserves his name of Comforter from the mere fact of his presence and indwelling.

But we pass on to notice that according to the twenty-sixth verse the Spirit of God exercises his office as a Paraclete, and comforts us by his teaching: "The Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." It is a part of the Spirit's work to make us understand what Jesus taught. If he were merely to bring to remembrance the words of Jesus it would do us little good; even as when a child learns his catechism and does not understand it, it is not of much service to him to bring to remembrance the words of the questions and answers; but if you first teach him their meaning, and then bring the words to remembrance, you have conferred upon him a double and an inestimable boon. Now, we can, so far as the letter goes, learn from

the Scriptures the words of Jesus for ourselves; but to understand these teachings is the gift of the Spirit of God, and of none else. After he takes the key and lets us into the inner meaning of the Lord's words, after he makes us experimentally and inwardly to know the force and the power of the truth which Christ revealed, then it is very profitable to us to have brought up before our minds the very words of Jesus, and they come to us full of power and sweetness. Now, beloved, you perceive that while the word "Comforter" does not take in all the meaning of the word Paraclete, yet every work of his assists our consolation, and the Holy Spirit as a teacher teaches us truth which comforts us. What comfort is there in the world equal to the words of Jesus, when they are really understood? Is not Jesus Christ himself "the consolation of Israel"? and, therefore, everything that is of him is full of consolation to Israel. If the Spirit of God makes us understand the doctrines of Christ, as for instance, his teaching concerning the pardon of sin by faith, and the love of God towards the contrite, his teaching in his own person of the need of a substitute, and of the provision of a substitute,—if those things be really taught to our souls, the Paraclete becomes indeed a Comforter to us. I can, as God may help me, teach you the letter of God's word, but there is One who teacheth you to profit effectually and savingly. May he exercise his office upon each one of you.

Furthermore, we note that in this manner, through the Holy Spirit we obtain peace. Observe the verse which follows: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." He who is taught of God naturally enjoys peace, for if I be taught that my sins were laid on Jesus, and the chastisement of my peace was upon him, how can I help having peace? If I am taught that Jesus intercedes for me before the eternal throne, and has taken his blood as my atonement into the holy place, how can I help having peace? And if I am taught the promises of God, and made to know that they are "yea and amen in Christ Jesus," how can I be prevented from enjoying peace? Can I not sing—

> "The gospel bears my spirit up,
> A faithful and unchanging God
> Lays the foundation for my hope,
> In oaths, and promises, and blood?"

Let the Spirit of God reveal God to you as the everlasting God, who loved you before the world was, as the unchanging God who never can turn away his heart from you; and can you do otherwise than rejoice with exceeding great joy? Let the Spirit of God reveal to you the pierced hands and feet of Jesus, let him enable you to put your finger into the prints of the nails, and touch the wounds of his feet, and lay your heart to his heart,—why, if you have not peace you would be a melancholy miracle of perverse despondency. But you must have rest when you have Jesus Christ, yea, and such a rest that Jesus calls it "my peace," the very peace that is in the heart of Christ, the unruffled serenity of the conquering Saviour, who has finished for ever the work which God gave him to do. What rich comfort is this which the Paraclete brings to us!

But we have not brought out all the meanings yet, for, as we have already said, the world Paraclete signifies *advocate*. You remember in John's first Epistle he uses this expression, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Now in the Greek the passage stands, "If any man sin, we have a *Paraclete* with the Father,"—it is the same word which is here rendered Comforter, and you see clearly that it would not do to render it Comforter in that place, else it would read, "If any man sin, we have a Comforter with the Father," which would be absurd. The word means "advocate" there, and so it must do here. The Spirit of God exercises for us the office of an advocate; but he is not an advocate or intercessor in heaven—our Lord Jesus Christ fills that office. The Holy Spirit does not intercede *for* the saints, but he "maketh intercession *in* the saints according to the will of God. God the Son makes intercession *for* the saints. God the Holy Spirit makes intercession *in* the saints. Let me show you how that is, by bringing you back to the chapters which we are studying. In the fifteenth chapter we find the Saviour describing his saints in the world as hated and persecuted for his sake, and he bids them expect this, but he consoles them in the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Now the passage means just this, while Jesus Christ was here, if any one had anything to say against him or his disciples, forward to the front came the Master, and he soon baffled his foes, so that they confessed, "Never man spake like this man." At this present time our Master and Head is gone from us; how are we to answer the attacks of the world? Why, we have another Paraclete to come to the front and speak for us, and if we had but confidence in him, beloved, he would have spoken for us much more loudly than sometimes he has done. But whenever we learn to leave the business in his hands he will do two things for us: first, he will speak for us himself; and next, he will enable us also to bear witness. At this present time many questions of doctrine are mooted, many objections to the truth are started, and there are many who would lay the axe at the very root of Christianity, and cut it down as a rotten tree. What is our answer? I will tell you. Nearly all the books that have been written to answer modern philosophies are waste time and waste paper. The only way in which the church can hold her own and answer her calumniators is by real power from God. Has she done anything for the world? Can she produce results? For by her fruits shall she be proved to be a tree of life to the nations. Now the Spirit of God, if we would but trust him and give up all this idolatry of human learning, cleverness, genius, eloquence, and rhetoric, and I know not what beside, would soon answer our adversaries. He would silence some of them by converting them, as he answered Saul of Tarsus by turning him from a persecutor to an apostle. He would silence others by confounding them, by making them see their own children and relations brought to know the truth. If there be not a miraculous spiritual power in the church of God at this day, she is an impostor. At this moment the only vindication of our existence is the presence

and work of the Paraclete among us. Is he still working and witnessing for Christ? I fear he is not in some churches, but *here* we behold him. Look at his workings in this place. Nearly twenty years ago our ministry commenced in this city, under much opposition and hostile criticism, the preacher being condemned on all hands as vulgar, unlearned, and, in fact, a nine days' wonder. Jesus Christ was preached by us in simpler language than men had been accustomed to hear, and every one of our sermons was full of the old-fashioned gospel. Many other pulpits were intellectual, but we were Puritanical. Rhetorical essays were the wares retailed by most of the preachers, but we gave the people the gospel, we brought out before the world the old Reformers' doctrines, Calvinistic truth, Augustinian teaching, and Pauline dogma. We were not ashamed to be the "echo of an exploded evangelism," as some wiseacre called us. We preached Christ and him crucified, and by the space of these twenty years have we ever lacked a congregation? When has not this vast hall been thronged? Have we ever lacked conversions? Has a Sabbath passed over us without them? Has not the history of this church from its littleness in Park Street until now been a march of triumph, with the hearts and souls of men as the spoil of the war, of which the standard has been Christ crucified? And it is so everywhere. Only let men come back to the gospel and preach it ardently, not with comeliness of words and affectation of polished speech, but as a burning heart compels them, and as the Spirit of God teaches them to speak it; then will great signs and wonders be seen. We must have signs following, we cannot answer the world else. Let them sneer, let them rave, let them curse, let them lie, God will answer them. It is ours in the power of the Spirit of God to keep on preaching Christ and glorifying the Saviour. Just as Jesus always met the adversary in a moment, and the disciples had no need of any other defender, so we have another Paraclete, who in answer to prayer will vindicate his own cause and gloriously avenge his own elect.

And, then, brethren, we are promised that this same Spirit will make us witness too. It shall be given us in the same hour what we shall speak. The Christians who were brought before the Roman tribunals often nonplussed their enemies, not by excellency of words and human wisdom, but by their holy simplicity and zeal. Christ by his Spirit was manifest in the midst of the primitive saints, and they were victorious through this other Paraclete who was with them.

Moreover, brethren, the advocacy of the Holy Spirit does not merely relate to the ungodly, but it has to do with ourselves. The Spirit of God is an advocate with us, or within us; he leads us into comfort, and advocates our cause before the judgment-seat of our conscience. This work he does in a manner strange to flesh and blood. Beloved, if the Holy Spirit be an advocate within thee, speaking peace within thee by Jesus Christ, I will tell thee how he will plead with thee. First, he will convince thee of sin. He will show thee to be altogether lost, and ruined, and undone; for till thy self-righteousness be swept out of thee there will be no solid consolation. He will convince thee of the master sin of having been an unbeliever in Christ, and he will lay thee low at the foot of the cross as well as at the foot of Sinai, to

make thee feel that thou art a sinner against love as well as law, a rebel against the five wounds of Jesus as well as against the ten commands of God: and when he has done this he will convince thee of righteousness, (John xvi. 10) that is to say, he will show thee that the righteousness of Christ renders thee perfectly acceptable with God. He will show thee, in fact, that Jesus is "made of God unto thee righteousness." Then the Spirit of God will comfort thee again by bringing home to thee a sense of judgment. He will show thee that thou and thy sins were both judged and condemned on Calvary. He will show thee that the evil which now seeks to get the mastery over thee, was there and then judged and condemned to die, so that thou art fighting with a convicted adversary, who only lingers for a little while and then shall be entirely dead, even as he now is crucified with Christ. When the Spirit of God has brought these three things home to thee, what an advocate he will be with thee! He will say, "Heart, canst thou now despair? What wilt thou despair about? Thy sin was laid on Jesus. What dost thou fear? Oh heart, dost thou lament thy lack of righteousness? Thou hast it all in Jesus. Wherefore dost thou tremble? Dost thou fear the coming judgment? Thou hast been judged and condemned in Christ; therefore the sin that is in thee shall die, and thine inner life shall live eternally." It is blessed when the Spirit of God argues in our conscience thus. Memory will say, "Thou didst so and so, that will condemn thee." But the Spirit of God replies, "That has been already acknowledged. I have already condemned this sin, but it was laid upon the great Scape-goat's head and carried away." Then will come up fear and say, "The Lord will visit this man's sin upon him." The Spirit of God will plead again, and ask, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Is God unrighteous to forget the work and labour of his dear Son?" So with blessed debating power, the Holy Comforter within our soul will plead and intercede in us, and we shall obtain consolation.

Once again, the Holy Spirit is a Paraclete according to the sixteenth chapter, at the thirteenth verse, by his guiding us into all truth, which is, I think, more than was meant by his teaching us all truth. There are a number of caverns, full of sparkling stalactites, in some parts of the world. Now, it is a good thing when you are travelling, to be taught where each of these caverns is—that is teaching you truth; but it is a better thing when the guide comes forward with his flaming torch, and conducts you down through the winding passages into the great subterranean chambers, and holds his flambeau aloft, while ten thousand crystals, like stars, vieing in colour with the rainbow, flash their beams upon you. So the Spirit of God will convince you that such and such a teaching is truth, and that is very much to know; but when he leads you into it, so that you experimentally know it, taste it, and feel it, oh, then you are admitted to the innermost cave of jewels, where "the diamond lights up the secret mine." It is a blessed thing when the Spirit of God guides us into all truth. A great many Christians never get *into* the truth. They sit on the outside of it, but do not enter in. It is like a great nut to them, they polish the shell and prize it, but if they could once pierce the kernel and taste the interior flavour of the nut, how greatly would they be comforted. John

Bunyan used to say he never knew a truth until it was burned into him as with a hot iron. I sympathise deeply in that expression. There are some truths in the Bible which nobody could make me doubt at all, because they are interwoven with my vitality; and others are so profitable to my inmost soul that I could not give them up; they are the very life and joy of my being. There is an old story of a bishop with £10,000 a year, who held an argument with a young man upon the correctness of Episcopacy, and at the end replied to his antagonist,—"Does this young man imagine that he can reason me out of £10,000 a year?" Self-interest in the bishop's case sustained his reasoning; the same is true with me, only in an infinitely higher degree, and in a far more spiritual sense. If the doctrines I preach to you be not true, I am a lost man, my life becomes an agonizing disappointment and my death a horrible calamity. I know the gospel is true, because I have tried and proved its power. I know its inside as well as its outside. I do not merely believe its creed, but its truth is to me real and practical. Hence I say, "Does the fool think he can argue me out of my peace of heart, my joy in the Lord, my hope of heaven?" It cannot be: the experienced believer is invulnerable from head to foot against anything and everything that can be hurled against him by scepticism. We are as sure of the truth of the gospel as we are of our own existence, The old philosopher heard a man assert that we do not exist, and his only reply was to get up and walk: so when we hear arguments against our holy faith, all we have to do is just to live on in the power of the Spirit, and silence gainsayers. May the Holy Spirit thus lead you into all truth—into the secret of the Lord may he conduct you, and there feast you upon fat things, full of marrow, and upon wines on the lees well refined.

Once more, in the sixteenth chapter and fourteenth verse, we are told that the Paracrete glorifies Christ by "taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us." Could infinite wisdom select a sweeter topic for a disconsolate heart than "the things of Christ?" Ah! man, when you speak of the things of Christ to a broken heart you have laid your fingers on the right string. You may bring me the things of Moses and of David, of Solomon and of Daniel, but what are they to me compared with the things of Christ? Bring me the things of Christ. These are the balm of Gilead, these are the plaisters which heal the sore. These are the true medicines of souls diseased. Therefore the Holy Spirit in his infinite wisdom lifts Jesus up before us, makes him great in our esteem, glorifies him in our hearts, and straightway our souls are full of consolation. How could it be otherwise?

I am sorry that my subject is much too long for my time this morning, and therefore I must pass away from this first head to glance at the second point, which I had hoped to have dwelt upon at length.

II. We shall now, secondly, REMARK UPON THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S COMFORT, and will speak very briefly.

It is evident from the passages we have read to you this morning, that the Spirit of God never dissociates his comfort from character. John xiv. 15: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." The Spirit of God never comforts a man *in* his sin. Disobedient Christians

must not expect consolation; the Holy Spirit sanctifies, and then consoles. Search and look, ye who hang your heads like bulrushes! See what sin it is that makes you sorrow—obey, and ye shall be comforted.

Next, the Spirit of God does not aim at working mere comfort by itself and alone; but he produces peace in the heart as the result of other divinely useful processes. He does not comfort us as a fond mother may please her wayward child by yielding to its foolish wishes. The mother does not teach the child anything, nor does she cleanse its body or purify its heart in order to comfort it; perhaps she even neglects these to please the little one; but the Holy Spirit never acts so unwisely. He blesses by purity and then by peace. When a man is feeling pain he is very desirous that the surgeon should administer some drug which will stop the unpleasant sensation immediately; yet the surgeon refuses to do anything of the kind, but endeavours to remove the cause of the evil, which lies far lower than the pain. Is not the doctor right? So the Spirit of God comforts us by taking away our ignorance and giving us knowledge, by removing our misapprehensions and giving us clear understanding, and by taking away our insensibility and convincing us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Do not expect to get comfort by merely running to sweet texts, or listening to pleasing preachers who give you nothing but cups of sugared doctrine, but expect to find comfort through the holy, reproving, humbling, strengthening, sanctifying processes which are the operation of the Divine Paraclete.

Note next, the comfort of the Holy Spirit is not a comfort founded upon concealment. Some have obtained consolation by conveniently forgetting troublesome truth; now the Holy Spirit lays the whole truth open before us, he brings all truth to our recollection and hides nothing from us; therefore, the comfort we obtain from him is worth having: the consolation, not of fools but of wise men; peace, not for blind bats but for bright-eyed eagles; peace, which age and experience will *not* invalidate, but which both these will deepen, causing it to grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength. Such is the consolation which the Holy Spirit gives.

And mark, and be glad of it, it is a comfort always in connection with Jesus. If you get near to Jesus in your contemplations, you feel you are approaching those comforts which the Spirit intends you to enjoy. Oh, beloved, do not run for consolation to mere prophecies of the future, or soft reflections about the past. Hard by the cross is the deep well of consolation undefiled, from which the Eternal Spirit draws full buckets for his thirsty people. Be afraid of that comfort which is not based upon truth. Hate the comfort which does not come from Christ. Water from the well of Bethlehem is what you want.

It is comfort, too, which is always available. The comforts of the Holy Spirit do not depend upon health, strength, wealth, position, or friendship; the Holy Spirit comforts us through the truth, and the truth does not change. He comforts us through Jesus, and he is "yea and amen"; therefore, our comforts may be quite as lively when we are dying as when we are in vigorous health, and our consolations may be even more abounding when the purse is empty, and the cruse of oil low, than when all worldly store and cheer abound to us. This is the com-

fort; beloved, which in all ages has been the mainstay of believers. It was the comfort of the Spirit which brought the martyrs to stand before their accusers and to face death with unblanching cheek; it was the comfort of the Holy Spirit which led the Waldenses to count not their lives dear to them; it made Luther so brave in face of death, and Latimer so merry even upon the blazing stake. Many a man hath died in ecstacy under the power of this consolation, and many a woman has pined away slowly, rejoicing so to do, because, when heart and flesh have failed her, this consolation has been the strength of her soul. If you can know the Holy Ghost as your Paraclete you need not desire any other consolation.

III. And now, finally, let us utter SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE WHOLE SUBJECT.

First, to the believer: Dear brother, honour the Spirit of God as you would honour Jesus Christ if he were present. If Jesus Christ were dwelling in your house you would not ignore him, you would not go about your business as if he were not there. Do not ignore the presence of the Holy Ghost in your soul. I beseech you, do not live as if you had not heard whether there were any Holy Spirit. To him pay your constant adorations. Reverence the august guest who has been pleased to make your body his sacred abode. Love him, obey him, worship him.

Take care never to impute the vain imaginings of your fancy to him. I have seen the Spirit of God shamefully dishonoured by persons—I hope they were insane—who have said that they have had this and that revealed to them. There has not for some years passed over my head a single week in which I have not been pestered with the revelations of hypocrites or maniacs. Semi-lunatics are very fond of coming with messages from the Lord to me, and it may spare them some trouble if I tell them once for all that I will have none of their stupid messages. When my Lord and Master has any message to me he knows where I am, and he will send it tome direct, and not by madcaps. Never dream that events are revealed to you by heaven, or you may come to be like those idiots who dare impute their blatant follies to the Holy Ghost. If you feel your tongue itch to talk nonsense, trace it to the devil, not to the Spirit of God. Whatever is to be revealed by the Spirit to any of us is in the word of God already—he adds nothing to the Bible, and never will. Let persons who have revelations of this, that, and the other, *go to bed and wake up in their senses.* I only wish they would follow the advice, and no longer insult the Holy Ghost by laying their nonsense at his door.

At the same time, since the Holy Spirit is with you, beloved, in all your learning ask him to teach you, in all your suffering ask him to sustain you, in all your teaching ask him to give you the right words; in all your witness-bearing ask him to give you constant wisdom, and in all service depend upon him for his help. Believingly reckon upon the Holy Spirit. We do not continually take him into our calculations as we should. We reckon up so many missionaries, so much money, and so many schools, and so conclude the list of our forces. The Holy Spirit is our great need, not learning or culture. Little knowledge, or great knowledge, shall answer almost as well if the Spirit of God be there; but

all your knowledge shall be worthless without him. Let but the Spirit of God come, and all shall be right. I would we took the power of the Spirit into our calculations always. You have a class at school, and you do not feel fit to teach it; ask him to help you, and you do not know how well you will teach. You are called to preach, but you feel you cannot; you are dull, and your talk will be flat, stale, unprofitable; bring the Holy Spirit into it, and if he fire you, you shall find even the slender materials you have collected will set the people on a blaze. We ought to reckon upon the Spirit, he is our main force, what if we say he is our sole force, and we grieve him exceedingly when we do not reckon upon him. Love the Spirit, worship the Spirit, trust the Spirit, obey the Spirit, and, as a church, cry mightily to the Spirit. Beseech him to let his mighty power be known and felt among you. The Lord fire your hearts with this sacred flame, for as this made Pentecost stand out from all other days, may it make the close of this year stand out in our history from all other years. Come, Holy Spirit now! Thou art with us, but come with power and let us feel thy sacred might!

To the unconverted, these few words: Dear friend, if thou art ever to be saved, the Holy Spirit is essential to thee. Except thou be born again from above, thou canst never see the kingdom of God, much less enter it. Without the Holy Ghost thou art dead; thou wilt never come to any life unless he quicken thee; and even the Saviour himself upon the cross will never be a Saviour to thee, till the Holy Spirit come and give thee eyes with which to look upon him, and a heart with which to receive him. Remember that. Therefore I charge thee take care that thou honour that Spirit, and say never a word against him, lest thou be found guilty of that sin against the Holy Ghost which shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. And let me ask thee, has he ever convinced thee of thy sin in not believing in Jesus? Has he convinced thee, that there is no righteousness but in Christ? Has he convinced thee that God will judge thee and all the rest of mankind according to our gospel by Christ Jesus? If so, since he has done thus much for thee, beseech him now to take of the things of Christ and show them to thee. There is hope for thee there. All the salvation of a sinner lies in Jesus, and when the Spirit of God brings Jesus to the heart he brings salvation. Oh, poor heart, thou wilt never get out of Doubting Castle, never cease to be a captive, till the Spirit bring the things of Jesus to thee; and I pray that he may, and that he may do so at once. Submit thyself now to all that he teaches thee. Believe the truth as he reveals it. Above all, listen thou, and be obedient to that great command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." May the Spirit of God lead you in the way of humble confession of sin, of repentance of sin and of believing in Jesus, and then we will meet in heaven to bless the Eternal Paraclete, with the Father and Son for ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A ROOT OUT OF A DRY GROUND.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A root out of a dry ground."—Isaiah liii. 2.

THE prophet is speaking of the Messiah. He declares of him, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." It is marvellous that with such plain prophecies concerning the Messiah, the Jews should have made such a fatal mistake in reference to him. They looked for a temporal prince, who would come in splendour, notwithstanding that this and other Scriptures speak of his humiliation in express terms. Every unprejudiced person might have seen from this passage that the Messiah, when he came, was not to be surrounded with pomp, but would come as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," to be "despised and rejected of men." Yet, though the truth was written as with a sunbeam, and the Jewish people were pretty generally acquainted with their own Scriptures, so that they had the opportunity of knowing it, yet when the Messiah came unto his own, his own received him not, and though favoured with the clearest prophecies concerning him they rejected his claims, and cried, "Let him be crucified!" Does not this teach us that the plainest instruction, earnestly and forcibly delivered, will not be understood by the unregenerate mind? The carnal mind discerns not spiritual things, its eye is darkened, its ear is heavy. Inspiration itself cannot put a spiritual truth so clearly that men will see it, unless their eyes be opened by the Holy Spirit. Vain is the best light to blind men. Beloved, remember that what was true of the Jews is equally true of the Gentiles. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the simplest thing in the world, but yet no man truly understands it until he is taught of God. There are preachers who labour after simple words, and seek out instructive similitudes, by which to make the gospel clear to every apprehension; but yet of the unregenerate it may be said, "Their foolish heart is darkened." Sin has brought upon the human race a mental incapacity with regard to spiritual

subjects. They rush on in darkness, though the gospel creates a noonday around them; they grope for the wall like the blind, though the Sun of Righteousness shines with infinite brightness. Alas! to what has our nature fallen! How is the image of God marred within us! How ardently should we adore the Holy Spirit, that he stoops to us even in this our blindness, and is pleased to remove the scales and pour light into our souls. Whatever we have rightly discerned has been revealed to us by his teaching, for apart from his illumination we should have been as obstinately unbelieving as the Jews, who knew not their King. Dear hearers, how is it with you? Are ye blind also? Though living in the gospel day, it may be you have never seen the Saviour with the eye of faith. Are ye blind also? Oh, if ye be, may he who alone can teach you to profit, instruct you in the faith of Jesus, and in his light may you see light!

Now, turning to the text itself, you will observe that Isaiah describes our Lord Jesus as growing up like "a tender plant," a weak branch, a suckling, a sapling, a plant that very readily might be destroyed. We cannot pass over that comparison without a note or two, though we intend to dwell mainly upon the next clause. Our Lord Jesus Christ in his humiliation appeared in great feebleness; born a helpless babe, he was in his infancy in great danger from the hand of Herod, and though preserved, it was not by a powerful army, but by flight into another land. His early days were not spent amid the martial music of camps, or in the grandeur of courts, but in the retirement of a carpenter's shop,—fit place for "a tender plant." His life was gentleness, he was harmless as a lamb. At any time it seemed easy to destroy both him and his system. When he was nailed to the cross to die, did it not appear as if his whole work had utterly collapsed and his religion would be for ever stamped out? The cross threatened to be the death of Christianity as well as of Christ; but it was not so, for in a few days the power of the divine Spirit came upon the church. At its first setting up, how feeble was the kingdom of our Lord! When Herod stretched out his hand to vex certain of the church, unbelief might have said, "there will be an utter end ere long." When, in after years, the Roman Emperors turned the whole imperial power against the gospel, stretching forth an arm long enough to encompass the entire globe, and uplifting a hand more heavy than an iron hammer, how could it be supposed that the Christian church would still live on? It bowed before the storm like a tender shoot, but it was not uprooted by the tempest; it survives to this day; and although we do not rejoice at this moment in all the success which we could desire, yet still that tender shoot is full of vitality, we perceive the blossoms of hope upon it, and expect soon to gather goodly clusters of success.

Christianity in our own hearts,—the Christ within us,—is also a "tender plant" In its upspringing it is as the green blade of corn, which any beast that goeth by may tread upon or devour. Oftentimes to our apprehension, it has seemed that our spiritual life would soon die: it was no better than a lily, with a stalk bruised and all but snapped in twain. The mower's scythe of temptation has cut down the outgrowth of our spiritual life, but, blessed be God, he who cometh

down like rain upon the mown grass has restored our verdure and maintained our vigour to this day. Tender as our religion is, it is beyond the power of Satan to destroy it. Weak as we are, we have not utterly fallen, nor shall we; for the feeble shall be victorious and the "lame shall take the prey." Though grace is often like to the hyssop for its weakness, it is ever as the oak for endurance. Man threatens to crush the church, or hopes to uproot true grace from the heart of the timid believers, but it shall not be done: the "tender plant" shall become a goodly cedar, and the weakness of God shall baffle the power of man.

Now let us turn to the similitude which we have selected for our text, —"A root out of a dry ground."

First, we will *explain the meaning of the metaphor*; then, secondly, speak of *our experimental knowledge of its truth;* thirdly, dwell for a while upon *the encouragements which it affords;* and, fourthly, upon *the glory which it displays.*

I. First, then, this morning, our Lord Jesus is said to be "a root out of a dry ground." What is THE HISTORICAL MEANING OF THIS METAPHOR? We believe that it applies to the person of the Lord, and also to his cause and kingdom:—to himself personally and to himself mystically. He is "a root out out of a dry ground."

A root which springs up in a fat and fertile field, owes very much to the soil in which it grows. We do not wonder that some plants thrive abundantly, for the earth in which they are planted is peculiarly congenial to their growth; but if we see a root or a tree luxuriating upon a flinty rock, or in the midst of arid sand, we are astonished and admire the handiwork of God. Our Saviour is a root that derives nothing from the soil in which it grows, but puts everything into the soil. Christ does not live because of his surroundings, but he makes those to live who are around him; and Christianity in this world derives nothing from the world except that which alloys and injures it; but it imparts every blessing to the place where it comes. Note, then, this truth, —that Christ is always "a root out of a dry ground;" he derives nothing from without, but is self-contained and self-sustained in all the strength and excellence which he displays. Let us dwell on that truth.

It is quite certain that our Lord derived nothing whatever from *his natural descent.* He was the Son of David, and lawful heir to the royal dignities of the tribe of Judah; but his family had fallen into obscurity, had lost position, wealth, and repute. Joseph, his nominal father, was only a carpenter; Mary, his mother, but a humble village maiden. The glory had altogether departed from Judah when Shiloh came. No crown was treasured amid the heirlooms of Joseph, and no sceptre was comprehended in the scanty portion of Mary. He who was born king of the Jews inherited nothing from his parents by way of honour and dignity,—his only portion was the danger of being sought out by the cunning and cruelty of Herod. Now, had our Lord been descended from the Pharaohs, had he come into the world as the scion of a long line of Cæsars, or as the heir to a wide-spread monarchy, it would have been said, "Every man respects pedigree and descent, and hence the triumphs of his teaching."

But who shall do otherwise than magnify the Lord alone, when the blessed and only Potentate is born in lowliest poverty.

> "Lo God bedews old Jesse's root
> With blessings from the skies;
> He makes the Branch of promise shoot,
> The promised Prince arise."

Nor did our Lord derive assistance from *his nationality;* it was no general recommendation to his teaching that he was of the seed of Abraham. Why, to this day, to many minds, it is almost shameful to mention that our Saviour was a Jew. Though certainly the Jew is of an honourable race, ancient and venerable, as having been chosen of God of old, yet among the sons of men the name of Jew has not yet lost the opprobrium which long ages of cruel oppression and superstitious hate have cast upon it. It is said that there was no nation, immediately after the time of our Saviour, that the Romans ardently hated except the Jews. The Romans were peculiarly tolerant of all religions and customs; by conquest their empire had absorbed men of all languages and creeds, and they usually left them undisturbed: but the Jewish faith was too peculiar and intolerant to escape derision and hatred. After the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, the Jews were hunted down, and the connection of Christianity with Judaism so far from being an advantage to it became a serious hindrance to its growth. Christianity was confounded with Judaism, and made to share the political obloquy of the Jewish nation as well as its own reproach. Had our Saviour been born in Greece, there is no doubt that as a religious teacher he would have commanded far more attention than as coming forward from Jerusalem or Nazareth. He owed nothing to his Jewish birth, for if anything good could have come out of Israel in former days, behold into what a state it had fallen,—it was dead politically, religiously, and mentally. Look at Phariseeism, what shall I say of it, but that it had perverted the noblest into the basest? Look at Sadduceeism, with its profession of superior wisdom, its intense unbelief, and I may add its consequent folly. Whatever power the Jewish Monotheism may have had in the world, had perished beneath the destructive influences of a ritualistic Phariseeism and a broad church Sadduceeism. Our Saviour, could he have disowned all connection with Israel, might have been rather strengthened than weakened by so doing. He was in this respect "a root out of a dry ground." Mentally, among the Jews nothing was left; no harp resounded with psalms like those of David; no prophet mourned in plaintive tones like Jeremy, or sang in the rich organ tones of Isaiah; there remained not even a Jonah to startle, or a Haggai to rebuke. No wise man gave forth his proverbs, nor preacher took up his parable. The nation had mentally reached its dregs, its scribes were dreaming over the letters of Scripture, insensible to its inner sense, and its elders were drivelling forth traditions of the fathers, and so sinking lower and lower in an inane superstition. It was a "dry ground" out of which Jesus sprang.

Nor did the Saviour owe anything to *his followers.* He might have selected, had he pleased, certain eminent persons as his first converts.

Casting his eye upon the reigning Cæsar and his royal subordinates, he might have turned their hearts to serve him, and so have surrounded himself with a discipleship culled from men of renown; but he did not so, else would men have said, "His religion might well spread with such powerful men at its head." The man chosen out of the people passed by the noble and elected the base. He might have journeyed at once to Athens, and have collected from the remnant of the old philosophic schools the choice thinkers of the age. There still survived the sects of the Stoics and the Epicureans, and the old learning of Socrates and Plato was not quite forgotten; he might have called to his feet the leaders in the more potent schools of thought; but he did not so, else they would have said that Christianity might well triumph with such master minds to propagate it. He might have gone to the Forum at Rome, and there have selected men of mighty eloquence; he might have converted the orators of the tribune, or the persuasive speakers of the senate, and have set such men to lead the van of the new faith; but he did not so, else they would have said that rhetoric achieved the victory, and eloquence with her charms had spell-bound the world. See ye not how he hastens to the fisher boats on the Lake of Gennesaret, and calls men of the roughest exterior and the least cultured intellect. Shall a world-subduing religion be disseminated by peasants and mariners? So did he ordain it. He selected men commonly known to be unlearned and ignorant, and made them apostles of the faith. Whatever they became in after life, he made them that. Peter did not make Christianity, but Christianity made Peter what he was. Paul brought nothing to Christ, but Christ gave everything to Paul. I admit that the apostles became great men; they were eloquent and learned in the truest sense of the term, being taught of God, but Jesus, as "the root," bore them, not they the root. This wondrous root fertilised the soil in which it grew; it derived nothing from the men, but gave the men all they possessed. But we will pass on.

Our Saviour is "a root out of a dry ground" as to *the means which he chose for the propagation of his faith.* Nobody wonders that Mahometanism spread. After the Arab prophet had for a little while himself personally borne the brunt of persecution, he gathered to his side certain brave spirits who were ready to fight for him at all odds. You marvel not that the sharp arguments of scimitars made many converts. Any religion will win assent when the alternative is conversion or instant death. Give a man a strong right hand and a sharp sabre, and he is a fit missionary of Mahomet's doctrine. Our Saviour gave to his soldiers neither spears nor swords, but said, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." He asked no aid from governments, he disowned the temporal arm altogether as his ally. Had our Saviour been a State-churchman, and not, as he was, the grandest of nonconformists, it would have been said that under the wings of the State his church was fostered into power. If Cæsar had said, "I will gather thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," it would not have been surprising if the brood of Christians had multiplied indefinitely. But our Saviour sought no succour from potentates, and rested not upon an arm of flesh

The people would have made him a king, but he hid himself, for his kingdom was not of this world, therefore did not his servants fight.

Our Saviour as he used no force, so neither did he use any means which might enlist man's lower nature on his side. When I have heard of large congregations gathered together by the music of a fine choir, I have remembered that the same thing is done at the opera-house and the music-hall, and I have felt no joy. When we have heard of crowds enchanted by the sublime music of the pealing organ, I have seen in the fact rather a glorification of St. Cecilia than of Jesus Christ. Our Lord trusted in no measure or degree to the charms of music for the establishing his throne. He has not given to his disciples the slightest intimation that they are to employ the attractions of the concert room to promote the kingdom of heaven. I find no rubric in Scripture commanding Paul to clothe himself in robes of blue, scarlet, or violet; neither do I find Peter commanded to wear a surplice, an alb, or a chasuble. The Holy Spirit has not cared even to hint at a surpliced choir, or at banners, processions, and processional hymns. Now, if our Lord had arranged a religion of fine shows, and pompous ceremonies, and gorgeous architecture, and enchanting music, and bewitching incense, and the like, we could have comprehended its growth; but he is "a root out of a dry ground," for he owes nothing to any of these. Christianity has been infinitely hindered by the musical, the æsthetic, and the ceremonial devices of men, but it has never been advantaged by them, no, not a jot. The sensuous delights of sound and sight have always been enlisted on the side of error, but Christ has employed nobler and more spiritual agencies. Things which fascinate the senses are left to be the chosen instruments of Antichrist, but the gospel, disdaining Saul's armour, goes forth in the natural simplicity of its own might, like David, with sling and stone. Our holy religion owes nothing whatever to any carnal means; so far as they are concerned, it is "a root out of a dry ground."

Neither did the Saviour owe anything to *the times in which he lived.* Christianity, it is said by some, came upon the field at a time when it was likely to succeed. I utterly deny it: it was born at a period of history when the world by wisdom knew not God, and men were most effectually alienated from him. The more thinking part of the world's inhabitants at the time of Christ's coming were atheistic, and made ridicule of the gods, while the masses blindly worshipped whatever was set before them. The whole set and current of thought at the advent of our Lord was in direct opposition to such a religion as he came to inculcate. It was an age of luxury—Rome was full of wealth and the desire for self-indulgence. Wherever Romans settled, they built magnificent villas, and used all the arts for the gratification of the flesh: was this a preparation for the doctrines of the cross? It was an age of universal vice. It is a great mercy that most of the ancient cities have been destroyed, and their works of art dashed to shivers, for many of them were unutterably vicious, and such as remain are doing not a little to degrade humanity. Vices which now we dare not speak of were then perpetrated in public; things that are now detested were performed as a part of

sacred worship. The world was rotten through and through. If darkness be a preparation for light, I grant you the world did prepare itself for Christ. If an Augean stable, pestilential with a putridity which supersedes all common rottenness, be in readiness for the coming of him who shall cleanse it, the world was prepared for Jesus, but not else. I deny that he owed anything to his times. He came when the times could not help him in any degree whatever, and his religion was "a root out of a dry ground."

Neither, again, let me say, did the religion of Jesus owe anything to *human nature?* It is sometimes said that it commends itself to human nature. It is false: the religion of Jesus opposes unrenewed human nature. In Christ's day revenge was one of the most glorious things known; it was sung of, it was preached upon, it was the joy of men; and what religion but Christianity ever taught men never to retaliate? Christ said, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you." Is this in human nature? Is there anything in the commands of Christ that at all flatters pride or conciliates lust? He judges our thoughts as well as our actions. "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Is that agreeable to human nature? Does that run in the same vein as our passions, think you? Mahomet prospered because his religion pandered to human weakness; but there is in the religion of Christ no yielding to what are called the natural passions, no providing for sensual desires. "Take up," saith he, "not thy scimitar but thy cross." He says not, "Increase thine harem." No, but "Crucify the flesh." Is there any glorification of human intellect in the religion of Jesus? Is not its invariable command, "Believe, and live." If Christianity spreads, it spreads in opposition to human nature, by changing human nature, by making it what it never was and never could have been, had not the incorruptible truth of God been planted in it like "a root in a dry ground."

Thus much, and perhaps too much, upon the historical meaning of the metaphor.

II. Now, briefly, but earnestly, OUR KNOWLEDGE OF ITS TRUTH EXPERIMENTALLY. Beloved, you remember your own conversion. When Jesus Christ came to you to save you, did he find any fertile soil in your heart for the growth of his grace? I must bear witness that to convince me of sin and humble me, he had need of all the mighty hammers of his power to break my rocky heart. Conviction of sin was no natural product of my mind. Repentance was a plant of the Lord's right hand planting, and not a native of the soil. Remorse we might have had by nature, but repentance never. And brethren, if now we have believed in Christ Jesus, and are resting in him, I am sure we must own that faith never sprang up naturally in the garden of our hearts: the Holy Spirit taught us how to believe in Jesus, and led us to look unto him that we might be saved. So far from helping Christ, my whole soul was opposed to him. If now I bow before his feet, and delight to call him my Master and my Lord, it is because I am subdued by his power, not because I have educated myself to it, or was at all inclined thereto. Religion, true religion, in the heart at conversion is "a root out of a dry ground."

Let me ask you who look into your own hearts, how have you found them since? Has there been anything in your natural humanity congenial with the new life which grace has begotten within you? You have the higher life in your souls, has it found sustenance in your flesh? Ah, it is sadly the reverse. Christ's life has come into us like Israel into the wilderness, and it finds in us no food; if manna do not drop from heaven, and water leap from the smitten rock, it must die in the desert of our soul. "In me, that is, in my flesh," said the apostle, "there dwelleth no good thing." Our carnal nature is still as evil as ever it was: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can it be." If you have grace in your hearts to-day, beloved, you have been made to feel that it is "a root out of a dry ground."

I bless the Lord that we have felt this at peculiar seasons. When you have had great joy in God, great exhilaration and delight, has it not usually been at times when you might least have expected it? When the body is gradually pining away with sickness, we have seen the spirit more triumphant than it was in health, deriving none of its joy from the strength of nature, but flourishing upon a secret provender of which the world knows nothing: it has been "a root out of a dry ground." Sometimes we have been desponding in spirit, our animal spirits as they are called, have been quite dried up, and yet or ever we were aware, our souls have been made like the chariots of Amminadib, and we have flashed and glowed with sacred delight. "A root out of a dry ground" again. Children have died, and perhaps a beloved wife has been taken away; possibly business has been against us, trials have multiplied, and yet at that very season we have walked nearer to God than ever we did before, and had more delight in his company, and have known more of the power of the Holy Spirit in our souls, than ever we did in days of prosperity;—all to show us that the grace within us lives by its own inward vigour and by supernatural help, and owes nothing to bodily health, nothing to outward circumstances, but is still a root flourishing best in a dry ground. There is much that is painful about this experience of the dryness of the ground, but there is something delightful in the experience of the growing of the root under such circumstances; for then all the glory is given to the Lord alone, and we dare not touch it, nay, not so much as with one of our fingers.

III. But I will pass on. This whole subject appears to me to afford much ENCOURAGEMENT to many.

And first, let me speak as earnestly as I can a word to those of you who are seeking after the Saviour, but are very conscious of your own sinfulness. You are depressed under a sense of being unworthy to be saved, and what is perhaps worse, you feel that though the gospel be preached to you you are unable to receive it of yourself. Deadness and powerlessness are the main thoughts upon your mind. Now, beloved, let this console you. Christ Jesus, when he saves a sinner, borrows no help whatever from the sinner himself. "It pleased the Father that in *him* should all fulness dwell." If there be all fulness in him, he does not need any contribution from us, and, blessed be his name, he never waits for any. We can give none, and he will receive none. Christ is all—does not that cheer you? Do you say, "I want

power"? In him is strength. "I want wisdom" say you:—he is "made of God unto us wisdom." "I want a tender heart";—who can give it you but Christ? "But, ah, I want to repent":—is he not "exalted on high to give repentance"? "But I long for faith." Well, and have you never read, "it is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"? He is "a root out of a dry ground," and your ground is very, very dry, but he will come and put fertility into it; he does not first want fertility in you. Poor, helpless, hopeless, stripped, and emptied one, thou needst not look for nor desire anything in thyself to prepare thee for Jesus; he delights to come into empty hearts to fill them with his love, into cold hearts to warm them with his sacred flame, and into dead hearts to give them life.

Now, the same thought which may thus comfort the seeker, and I pray it may, ought also to encourage any Christian who has been making discoveries of his own barrenness. It is not every child of God that knows himself thoroughly. We may go on a long time after our first conversion without any very deep understanding of what poor things we are. Have you begun to see yourself in the looking-glass of the word, and does the sight alarm and distress you? Are you crying, "My barrenness! my barrenness!" Beloved brother, Christ "is a root out of a dry ground," and though thou be thus barren now, thou art not one whit more barren than thou always hast been: thy sin alarms thee, but it was always there; thy natural death disgusts thee, but it is no new thing. "Oh, but I seem to be less than I was!" You never were anything, and if you had begun by understanding you were nothing, you would have begun in a wiser and happier way than you have done. Whenever the child of God says, "I find my total of natural strength is getting smaller," he is only approximating to the truth, for his strength is "perfect weakness." Beloved, when we get to realise the lesson taught us in our baptism, we are drawing near to truth. What is that? say you. Why, it is the burial of the creature in Christ's tomb. Circumcision signifies the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but baptism teaches us the burial of it altogether, as an incorrigible and utterly corrupt thing, not to be reformed and mended, but to be reckoned as dead and buried. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Be nothing at all, and let Jesus be all in all. When at any time you are cast down by a sense of your nothingness, remember that your Lord is "a root out of a dry ground."

The same comfort avails for every Christian worker. You who work for Jesus in the pulpit, or in the Sunday school, or elsewhere, I am quite sure if God blesses you you do not always feel alike. Those machines that preach regularly in the same way accomplish very little. God means to use *men*, and while men are men they will be sensitive and changeable. Flesh and blood are not like marble,—they change, and God means to use the feelings of his ministers and his servants for divine ends and purposes. If God ever honours a man in public, he will whip him every now and then behind the door, and make him cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Now, brother, when you feel you are barren, do not fret or despair about it, but rather say, "Lord, here is a dry tree, come and make it bear fruit,

and then I shall joyfully confess "from thee is my fruit found." Lord, I am a withered branch by nature, come and put sap into me, and make me bud and blossom like Aaron's rod; so shall men see a miracle of grace and thou shalt have all the praise of it. Do not think that your unfitness to be used is really a disqualification with God. The last thing a man might choose to fight with would be the jaw bone of an ass, and yet Samson found it handy enough, and it made his victory the more famous. The last instrument God might choose to use might be yourself, and yet if he pleases there is a fitness in your unfitness, and a qualification in your disqualification. A man's conceit that he is well prepared for God to use him, will prove fatal to him. If a man be possessed of polished diction, very learned, a man of high family, a man of great repute, and so on, the likelihood is that he will be esteemed by his fellows so much that the Lord will say, "I cannot use this man lest men glorify him" Therefore God often uses young men, because people know they are fools; he honours illiterate men, that people may know that it is not by their learning. He chooses home-spun people, who speak without the polish which others have gained, and he uses them because the world says, "He is an unlearned man, and a rough vulgar fellow." Do you not see that thus all the glory goes to God. The man's disqualifications are his fitness. "The rather, therefore," saith the Apostle, "will I glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Go on, dear worker, for Jesus is "a root out of a dry ground," and in your dryness he will flourish.

Do you not think that this also ought to comfort all of us with regard to the times in which we live? They are said to be very horrible times,—they always were ever since I have known anything of the world, and I suppose they always were in our fathers' time. We are always at a crisis according to some people. I am not about to defend the times, they are, no doubt, very bad, for the innumerable spirits of evil are bold and active, while good men seem to have lost their courage. We find amalgamations and compromises *ad infinitum*, and the precious truth of God is trodden as the mire of the streets. What about all this? Are we discouraged? Far from it. Bad times are famous times for Christ. When Wycliffe came, the times were dark enough in England, and therefore the morning star was the more welcome. When Luther came into the world, the times were almost as black as they could be and therefore good times for reformation! The times were dead enough when Wesley and Whitfield came: but they proved glorious days for the Lord to work in! And if you discern now that there is not much prayerfulness, nor much spirituality, nor much truthful doctrine, nor much zeal, do not fret; it is thoroughly dry soil, and now the root of grace will grow. John Bunyan once said that when he heard the young fellows swear so profanely in his parish, he used to think what men God would make of them when he converted them! Let us think of that. Suppose he saves those wretched priests who are trying to swallow down England, suppose he converts these profane rationalists, who almost deny God's existence,—what penitent sinners they will make when he once breaks their hearts, and what preachers of the word they will be when he renews them.

Let us have good hope. Our faith does not rise when people say the times are improving, nor do we despond when men denounce the times as bad. Eternity is the life time of God, and he will work out his purposes. Time may ebb and flow, God is in no hurry; but if the world goes on for a million of years God, will triumph in the end, and the poem of human history will not wind up with a dirge, but will end with a triumphant hymn after all. Let us be of good courage about that.

And thus we may be encouraged concerning any particularly wicked place. Do not say, "It is useless to preach down there, or to send missionaries to that uncivilized country." How do you know? Is it very dry ground? Ah, well, that is hopeful soil; Christ is a "root out of a dry ground," and the more there is to discourage the more you should be encouraged. Read it the other way. Is it dark? Then all is fair for a grand show of light; the light will never seem so bright as when the night is very very dark. Come with the salt of Christ where there is most putridity. Where is the scene for the triumph of the physician but where disease has reigned supreme? Go with Christ's gospel in your hands where it is most required.

The same is true of individual men, you should never say, "Well, such a man as that will never be converted." You parents do not say, "Now, there is Mary, she has a sweet temper, I expect to see her brought to Christ, and there is John, an open-hearted lad, seems very attentive in the house of God, I expect to see him saved; but, as for Tom, he is such a wild dare-devil fellow, I shall never see him saved." I should not wonder that he is just the very one whom God will bring to himself, and make him to be the joy and gladness of your old age. Who are you that you should set up to elect God's people? He has done that years ago, and he has often elected the very ones whom you would have cast out. Seek the conversion of all persons, and all classes, all men, and all your relatives, and all your children, and you do not know whether any shall be saved, this or that. He is "a root out of a dry ground." Look for the dry ground, and rather rejoice when you see it is dry ground, with the comfortable hope that the root will spring up there.

IV. I must close with a few words upon THE GLORY WHICH ALL THIS DISPLAYS. Christ's laurels, beloved, at this day are none of them borrowed. When he shall come in his glory there will be none among his friends who will say, "O King, thou owest that jewel in thy crown to me." None will whisper among themselves, that if the honour be given to the Captain yet it was a soldiers' battle after all. No, but everyone will own that he was the author and the finisher of the whole work, and therefore he must have all the glory of it, since we who were with him were dry ground, and he gave life to us but borrowed nothing from us. In the end of the world it will be seen how Christ has sedulously shaken off from him everything that could have marred his victory. This is most prominent in history. The church of God went on gloriously and subdued the nations, till that unbaptised heathen Constantine thought, as a piece of state policy, that he would get the Christians on his side to secure for him a throne which else he would have lost; and that old sinner made Christianity a national religion, and from that day it was pure Christianity no more. You could not

find pure religion then, except you went to the valleys of Piedmont, amongst the persecuted Waldenses, where it was maintained. Religion, as far as real, true, pure holiness was concerned, almost ceased to exist from the day when the royal hand inflicted a spiritual scrofula upon the church by its touch. The dark ages were a chastisement to the church for leaning upon an arm of flesh. Then came the Reformation, and as long as men preached the gospel, and depended upon spiritual power only, even persecution made it spread; but those sinners, Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth, must needs extend the royal wing over it, and it sickened almost to death. The despised Puritans became the representatives of the crucified Lord. And then there came a time when these Puritans were multiplied, and they erred, and they took the sword (and if Puritans take the sword they can fight, mark you), and they got the upper hand by the arm of flesh, and then down went the spirituality of Puritanism, because whoever it is that thinks to bring glory to God in that way, God will have nothing to do with him. And now, at this day the Lord may bless his dissenting people in this country: but if they seek political power, and lean upon the education of their ministers, or any other earthly thing, God will cast them off as he has all the others. History shows that Christ blesses a humble, believing, trustful, spiritually minded people; but when they cringe before the king, or use sword or bayonet, from that moment the Master puts them down, and begins again at the first foundation, for it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." And so it shall be. When at the last the entire church shall rise in all its splendour, not a single stone shall bear the mark of the carver's tool of human workmanship: from basement to pinnacle there shall be no token of human masonry; no king shall be able to say, "I gave that glorious window of chrysolite," no prince shall say, "I contributed that pinnacle of sapphire or chrysoprasus"; no minister shall be able to say, "My eloquence made yonder gate of agate, and opened those windows of carbuncle." No angel even shall be able to say, "I spread the sacred pavement of transparent gold like unto pure glass," but it shall be to God, to God, to God alone;—the foundations laid in the divine decree, the stones cemented with the fair vermillion of the Saviour's atoning blood, each gem fashioned and placed by the mysterious Spirit of the living God, and the whole temple fitly framed together;—glowing with the glory of God, bright with the presence of God, from foundation to pinnacle, it shall speak of God, God, God alone. When that palace shall be complete, then from the ends of the earth shall be heard the shout, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Hushed be every other acclamation! this anthem drowns them all. Let it in our hearts drown them all. The Lord, the Lord alone, shall be exalted in that day, for he is God, and beside him there is none else!" Amen and Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah lxiii. and lxiv.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GREAT ASSIZE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, AUGUST 25TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."—2 Corinthians v. 10.

THIS morning we preached concerning the resurrection of the dead, and it seems consistent with order to carry forward our thoughts this evening, to that which follows immediately after the resurrection, namely: the general judgment; for the dead rise on purpose that they may be judged in their bodies. The Resurrection is the immediate prelude to the Judgment. There is no need that I try to prove to you from Scripture that there will be a general judgment, for the Word of God abounds with proof-passages. You have them in the Old Testament. You find David anticipating that great assize in the Psalms (especially in such as the forty-ninth and fiftieth, the ninety-sixth Psalm, and the three that follow it), for most assuredly the Lord cometh: he cometh to judge the earth in righteousness. Very solemnly and very tenderly does Solomon in the Ecclesiastes warn the young man, that, let him rejoice as he may and cheer his heart in the days of his youth, for all these things God will bring him into judgment; for God will judge every secret thing. Daniel in the night visions beholds the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven, and drawing near to the Ancient of Days; then he sits upon the throne of judgment and the nations are gathered before him. It was no new doctrine to the Jews; it was received and accepted by them as a most certain fact that there would be a day in which God would judge the earth in righteousness. The New Testament is very express. The twenty-fifth of Matthew, which we read to you just now, contains language, which could not possibly be more clear and definite, from the lips of the Saviour himself.

He is the faithful Witness, and cannot lie. You are told that before him will be gathered all nations, and he shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Other passages there are in abundance, as, for instance, the one that is now before us, which is plain enough. Another we might quote is in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, the first chapter, from the seventh to the tenth verse. Let us read it, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." The book of the Revelation is very graphic in its depicting that last general judgment. Turn to the twentieth chapter, at the eleventh and twelfth verses. The seer of Patmos says, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Time would fail me to refer you to all the Scriptures. It is asserted over and over again by the Holy Spirit, whose word is truth, that there will be a judgment of the quick and of the dead.

Beside that direct testimony, it should be remembered there is a cogent argument that so it must needs be, from the very fact that God is just as the Ruler over men. In all human governments there must be an assize held. Government cannot be conducted without its days of session and of trial, and, inasmuch as there is evidently sin and evil in this world, it might fairly be anticipated that there would be a time when God will go on circuit, and when he will call the prisoners before him, and the guilty shall receive their condemnation. Judge for yourselves: is this present state the conclusion of all things? If so, what evidence would you adduce of the divine justice, in the teeth of the fact that the best of men are often in this world the poorest and the most afflicted, while the worst of men acquire wealth, practise oppression, and receive homage from the crowd? Who are they that ride in the high places of the earth? Are they not those, great transgressors, who "wade through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind"? Where are the servants of God? They are in obscurity and suffering full often. Do they not sit like Job among the ashes, subjects of little pity, objects of much upbraiding? And where are the enemies of God? Do not many of them

wear purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day? If there be no hereafter, then Dives has the best of it; and the selfish man who fears not God, is, after all, the wisest of men and more to be commended than his fellows. But it cannot be so. Our common sense revolts against the thought. There must be another state in which these anomalies will all be rectified. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable," says the apostle. The best of men were driven to the worst of straits in those persecuting times for being God's servants. How say ye then, *Finis coronat opus*, the end crowns the work? That cannot be the final issue of life, or justice itself were frustrated. There must be a restitution for those who suffer unjustly: there must be a punishment for the wicked and the oppressor.

Not only may this be affirmed from a general sense of justice, but there is in the conscience of most men, if not of all, an assent to this fact. As an old Puritan says, "God holds a petty session in every man's conscience, which is the earnest of the assize which he will hold by and by; for almost all men judge themselves, and their conscience knows this to be wrong and that to be right. I say 'almost all,' for there seems to be in this generation a race of men who have so stultified their conscience that the spark appears to have gone out, and they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. The lie they seem to approve, but the truth they do not recognise. But let conscience alone and do not stupify her, and you shall find her bearing witness that there is a Judge of all the earth who must do right." Now this is peculiarly the case when conscience is allowed full play. Men who are busy about their work or entertained with their pleasures, often keep their consciences quiet. As John Bunyan puts it, they shut up Mr. Conscience; they blind his windows; they barricade his doors; and as for the great bell on the top of the house, which the old gentleman was wont to ring, they cut the rope of it, so that he cannot get at it, for they do not wish him to disturb the town of Mansoul. But when death comes, it often happens that Mr. Conscience escapes from his prison-house, and then, I warrant you, he will make such a din that there is not a sleeping head in all Mansoul. He will cry out and avenge himself for his constrained silence, and make the man know that there is a something within him not quite dead, which cries out still for justice, and that sin cannot go unchastised. There must be a judgment, then. Scripture asserts it, that would be enough: but by way of collateral evidence the natural order of things requires it; and conscience attests it.

Now we come to consider what our text says about the Judgment. I pray you, brethren, if I should speak coldly to-night on this momentous truth, or fail to excite your attention and stir your deepest

emotions, forgive me, sirs; and may God forgive me, for I shall have good reason to ask God's forgiveness, seeing that if ever a topic should arouse the preacher to a zeal for the honor of his Lord and for the welfare of his fellow creatures, and so make him doubly in earnest, it is this. But, then, permit me to say, that, if ever there was a theme quite independent of the speaker, which on its own account alone should command your thoughtfulness, it is that which I now bring before you. I feel no need of oratory or of speech well selected: the bare mention of the fact that such a judgment is impending, and will ere long occur, might well hold you in breathless silence, still the very throbbings of your pulse, and choke the utterance of my lips. The certainty of it, the reality of it, the terrors that accompany it, the impossibility of escaping from it, all appeal to us now and demand our vigilance.

I. Ask ye now, WHO IS IT, or WHO ARE THEY THAT WILL HAVE TO APPEAR BEFORE THE THRONE OF JUDGMENT? The answer is plain; *it* admits of no exemption: "We must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ." This is very decisive, if there were no other text. We *must* all appear; that is to say, every one of the human race. We must *all* appear. And that the godly will not be exempted from this appearance is very clear, for the apostle here is speaking to Christians. He says, "*We* walk by faith, not by sight. *We* are confident. *We* labour," and so on; and then he puts it, "*We* must *all* appear." So that, beyond all others, it is certain that all Christians must appear there. The text is quite conclusive upon that point. And if we had not that text, we have the passage in Matthew, which we have read, in which the sheep are summoned there as certainly as are the goats; and the passage in the Revelation, where all the dead are judged according to the things which are written in the books. They are all there. And if the objection should be raised, "We thought that the sins of the righteous being pardoned, and for ever blotted out, they could never come into judgment," we have only to remind you, beloved, that if they are so pardoned and blotted out, as they undoubtedly are, the righteous have no reason to fear coming into judgment. They are the persons who covet the judgment, and will be able to stand there to receive a public acquittal from the mouth of the great Judge. Who, among us, wishes, as it were, to be smuggled into heaven unlawfully? Who desires to have it said by the damned in hell, "You were never tried, or else you might have been condemned as we were." No, brethren, we have a hope that we can stand the trial. The way of righteousness by Christ Jesus enables us to submit ourselves to the most tremendous tests which even that burning day can bring forth. We are not afraid to be put into the balances. We even desire that day when our faith in Jesus Christ is strong and firm; for we say, "Who is he that

condemneth?" We can challenge the day of judgment. Who is he that shall lay anything to our charge in that day, or at any other, since Christ hath died and hath risen again? It is needful that the righteous should be there that there may not be any partiality in the matter whatever; that the thing may be all clear and straight, and that the rewards of the righteous may be seen to be, though of grace, yet without any violation of the most rigorous justice. Dear brethren, what a day it will be for the righteous! For some of them were—perhaps some here present are—lying under some very terrible accusation of which they are perfectly guiltless. All will be cleared up then, and that will be one great blessing of that day. There will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies. Men call the righteous, fools: then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They hounded them to death, as not being fit to live. In early ages they laid to the Christians charges of the most terrible character, which I should count it shame to mention. But then they will all be clear; and those of whom the world was not worthy, who were driven and hunted about and made to dwell in the caves of the earth, they shall come forth as worthy ones, and the world shall know her true aristocracy, earth shall own her true nobility. The men whose names she cast out as evil, shall then be held in great repute, for they shall stand out clear and transparent without spot or blemish. It is well that there should be a trial for the righteous, for the clearing of them, the vindication of them, and that it should be public, defying the cavil and criticism of all mankind.

"We must *all* appear." What a vast assembly, what a prodigious gathering, that of the entire human race! It struck me as I was meditating upon this subject, what would be the thoughts of Father Adam, as he stood there with Mother Eve and looked upon his offspring. It will be the first time in which he has ever had the opportunity of seeing all his children met together. What a sight will he then behold,—far stretching, covering all the globe which they inhabit, enough not only to people all earth's plains, but crown her hill-tops, and cover even the waves of the sea, so numberless must the human race have been, if all the generations that have ever lived, or shall ever live, shall at once rise from the dead! Oh, what a sight will that be! Is it too marvellous for our imagination to picture? Yet it is quite certain that the assemblage will be mustered, and the spectacle will be beheld. Every one from before the Flood, from the days of the Patriarchs, from the times of David, from the Babylonian kingdom, all the legions of Assyria, all the hosts of Persia, all the phalanx of the Greeks, all the vast armies and legions of Rome, the barbarian, the Scythian, the bond, the free, men of every colour and of every tongue—they shall all stand in that great day before the Judgment

Seat of Christ. There come the kings—no greater than the men they call their slaves. There come the princes—but they have doffed their coronets, for they must stand like common flesh and blood. Here come the judges, to be judged themselves, and the advocates and barristers, needing an advocate on their own account. Here come those that thought themselves too good, and kept the street to themselves. There are the Pharisees, hustled by the Publicans on either side and sunk down to the natural level with them. Mark the peasants rising from the soil; see the teeming myriads from outside the great cities streaming in, countless hosts such as no Alexander or Napoleon ever beheld! See how the servant is as great as his master! "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," are now proclaimed. No kings, no princes, no nobles, can shelter themselves behind their order, assert a privilege or claim an immunity. Alike on one common level they stand together, to be tried before the last tremendous tribunal. There shall come the wicked of every sort. Proud Pharaoh shall be there; Senacherib, the haughty; Herod, that would have slain the young child; Judas, that betrayed his master; Demas, that sold him for gold; and Pilate, who would fain have washed his hands in innocency. There shall come the long list of infallibles, the whole line of popes, to receive their damnation at the Almighty's hands, and the priests that trod upon the necks of nations, and the tyrants that used the priests as their tools—they shall come to receive the thunderbolts of God which they so richly deserve. Oh, what a scene will it be! These little companies, which look to us so large when they are gathered together beneath this roof, how do they shrink into the drop of a bucket as compared with the ocean of life that shall swell around the throne at the last great Judgment day. They shall all be there.

Now, the most important thought connected with this to *me*, is that *I* shall be there; to *you* young men, that *you* will be there; to *you*, ye aged of every sort, that *you, in propria personæ*—each one shall be there. Are you rich? Your dainty dress shall be put off. Are you poor? Your rags shall not exempt you from attendance at that court. None shall say, "I am too obscure." You must come up from that hiding place. None shall say, "I am too public." You must come down from that pedestal. Everyone must be there. Note the word "*We*." "*We* must *all* appear."

And still further note the word, "Appear." "We must all *appear*." No disguise will be possible. Ye cannot come there dressed in masquerade of profession or attired in robes of state, but we must *appear*; we must be seen through, must be displayed, must be revealed; off will come your garments, and your spirit will be judged of God, not after appearance, but according to the inward heart. Oh, what a day that will be when every man shall see himself, and every man shall see his

fellow, and the eyes of angels and the eyes of devils, and the eyes of God upon the throne, shall see us through and through. Let these thoughts dwell upon your minds, while you take this for the answer to our first enquiry, who is to be judged?

II. Our second question is, WHO WILL BE THE JUDGE? "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." That Christ should be appointed judge of all mankind is most proper and fitting. Our British law ordains that a man shall be tried by his peers, and there is justice in the statute. Now the Lord God will judge men, but at the same time it will be in the person of Jesus Christ the man. Men shall be judged by a man. He that was once judged by men shall judge men. Jesus knows what man should be;—he has been under the law himself in deep humility, who is ordained to administer the law in high authority. He can hold the scales of justice evenly, for he has stood in man's place and borne and braved man's temptations; he therefore is the most fit judge that could be selected. I have sometimes heard and read sermons in which the preacher said that a Christian ought to rejoice that his judge is his friend. There may be no impropriety intended, still it seems to me rather a questionable suggestion. I should not like to put it in that way myself; because any judge that was partial to his friends when he sat on the judgment seat would deserve to come off the seat immediately. As a judge I expect no favouritism from Christ. I expect when he sits there he will deal out even-handed justice to all. I cannot see how it is right for any minister to hold it forth that we should find encouragement in the judge being our friend. Friend or no friend, we shall go in for a fair trial every one of us, and Christ will not be a respecter of persons. Of him whom God has appointed to judge the world, it shall not be said when the assize is over that he winked at the crimes of some and extenuated them, while he searched out the faults of others and convicted them. He will be fair and upright throughout. He is our friend, I grant you, and he will be our friend and Saviour for ever; but, as a judge, we must keep to the thought, and believe and maintain it that he will be impartial to all the sons of men. You will have a fair trial, man. He that will judge you will not take sides against you. We have sometimes thought that men have been shielded from the punishment they deserved, because they were of a certain clerical profession, or because they occupied a certain official position. A poor labourer who kills his wife shall be hanged, but when another man of superior station does the like deed of violence, and stains his hands with the blood of her whom he had vowed to love and cherish, the capital sentence shall not be executed upon him. Everywhere we see in the world that with the best intentions justice somehow or other does squint a little. Even in this country there is just the slightest possible turning of the scale, and God

grant that may be cured ere long. I do not think it is intentional, and I hope the nation will not long have to complain about it. There ought to be the same justice for the poorest beggar that crawls into a casual ward, as for his lordship that owns the broadest acres in all England. Before the law, at least, all men ought to stand equal. So shall it be with the Judge of all the earth. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* Christ will by all means hold the scales even. Thou shalt have a fair trial and a full trial, too. There shall be no concealment of anything in thy favour, and no keeping back of anything against thee. No witnesses shall be borne across the sea to keep them out of the way. They shall all be there, and all testimony shall be there, and all that is wanted to condemn or to acquit shall be produced in full court at that trial, and hence it will be a final trial. From that court there will be no appeal. If Christ saith "Cursed!" cursed must they be for ever. If Christ saith "Blessed!" blessed shall they be for aye. Well, this is what we have to expect then, to stand before the throne of the man Christ Jesus the Son of God, and there to be judged.

III. Now the third point is, WHAT WILL BE THE RULE OF JUDGMENT? The text says "that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Then it would appear that our *actions* will be taken in evidence at the last. Not our profession, not our boastings, but our actions will be taken in evidence at the last, and every man shall receive according to what he hath done in the body. That implies that everything done by us in this body will be known. It is all recorded; it will be all brought to light. Hence, in that day every secret sin will be published. What was done in the chamber, what was hidden by the darkness, shall be published as upon the housetop—every secret thing. With great care you have concealed it, most dexterously you have covered it up; but it shall be brought out to your own astonishment to form a part of your judgment. There, hypocritical actions as well as secret sins will be laid bare. The Pharisee who devoured the widow's house and made a long prayer, will find that widow's house brought against him and the long prayer too, for the long prayer will then be understood as having been a long lie against God from beginning to end. Oh, how fine we can make some things look with the aid of paint and varnish and gilt; but at the last day off will come the varnish and veneer, and the true metal, the real substance, will then be seen.

When it is said that everything that is done in the body will be brought up as evidence against us or for us, remember this includes every omission as well as every commission; for that which is not done that ought to have been done is as greatly sinful as the doing of that which ought not to be done. Did not you notice when we were reading that twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, how those on the left hand were

condemned, not for what they did, but for what they did not do: "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." Where would some of you stand, according to this rule, who have lived in neglect of holiness, and neglect of faith, and neglect of repentance, before God all your days? Bethink yourselves, I pray you.

Recollect, too, that all our words will be brought up. For every idle word that man shall speak he will have to give an account. And all our thoughts, too, for these lie at the bottom of our actions and give the true colour to them good or bad. Our motives, our heart sins, especially, our hatred of Christ, our neglect of the gospel, our unbelief —all of these shall be read aloud and published unreservedly. "Well," saith one, "who then can be saved?" Ah! indeed, who then can be saved! Let me tell you who. There will come forward those who have believed in Jesus, and albeit they have many sins to which they might well plead guilty, they will be able to say, "Great God, thou didst provide for us a substitute, and thou didst say that if we would accept him he should be a substitute for us and take our sins upon himself, and we did accept him and our sins were laid on him, and we have now no sins; they have been transferred from us to the great Saviour, substitute and sacrifice." And in that day there will be none who can put in a demurrer to that plea: it will hold good; for God has said, "Whosoever believeth on Christ Jesus shall never be condemned." Then will the actions of the righteous, the gracious actions, be brought forth to prove that they had faith. For that faith which never evidences itself by good works is a dead faith and a faith that will never save a soul. Now, if the dying thief were brought up, he would say, "My sins were laid on Jesus." "Ay, but how about your good works? Thou must have some evidence of thy faith," Satan might reply. Then would the recording angel say, "The dying thief said to his fellow thief who was dying with him, 'Wherefore art thou railing?' In his last moments he did what he could: he rebuked the thief that was dying with him and made a good confession of his Lord. There was the evidence of the sincerity of his faith." Dear hearer, will there be any evidence of the sincerity of your faith? If your faith has no evidence before the Lord, what will you do? Suppose you thought you had a faith and went on drinking. Suppose you did as I know some have done here, go straight from this place into the public house? Or suppose you joined the Christian church and remained a drunkard? ay, and women have done that also as well as men. Suppose you professed to have faith in Christ and yet cheated in your weights and measures and common dealings? Do you think that God will never require these things at your hands? Oh, sirs, if ye be no better than other men in your conduct, ye *are* no better than

other men in your character, and ye will stand no better than other men in the judgment day. If your actions are not superior to theirs, you may profess what you will about your faith, but you are deceived, and, as deceivers, you will be discovered at the last great day. If grace does not make us differ from other men, it is not the grace which God gives his elect. We are not perfect, but all God's saints keep their eyes on the great standard of perfection, and, with strong desire, aim to walk worthy of their high calling of God and to bring forth works which prove that they love God; and if we have not these signs following faith, or if they are not put in as evidence for us, at the last great day we shall not be able to prove our faith. Oh, you who have no faith in Christ, no faith in Jesus the substitute; that terrible negative, that treacherous unbelief of yours, will be a condemning sin against you! It will be proof positive that you hated God; for a man must hate God indeed who will spurn his counsels, give no heed to his reproof, scorn his grace, and dare the vengeance of him who points out the way of escape and the path that leadeth to life. He that will not be saved by God's mercy proves that he hates the God of mercy. If God gives his own Son to die and men will not trust in his Son, will not have him as their Saviour, that one sin, if they had no other, would at once prove that they were enemies of God and black at heart. But if thy faith be in Jesus, if thou lovest Jesus, if thy heart goes out to Jesus, if thy life be influenced by Jesus, if thou makest him thy example as well as thy Saviour, there will be evidence—thou canst not see it, but there will be evidence—in thy favour. For notice those gracious things, when the evidence was brought, and Christ said, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat—thirsty, and ye gave me drink," they said, "O Lord, we never knew this." Should any man stand up here and say, "I have plenty of evidence to prove my faith," I should reply, "Hold your tongue, sir! Hold your tongue! I am afraid you have no faith at all, or you would not be talking about your evidence." But if you are saying, "Oh, I am afraid I have not the evidence that will stand me in good stead at the last," yet if all the while you have been feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and doing all you can for Christ, I would tell you not to be afraid. The master will find witnesses to say, "That man relieved me when I was in poverty. He knew I was one of Christ's and he came and helped me." And another will come and say (perhaps it will be an angel), "I saw him when he was alone in his chamber and heard him pray for his enemies." And the Lord will say, "I read his heart when I saw how he put up with rebuke, and slander, and persecution, and would not make any answer for my sake. He did it all as evidence that my grace was in his heart." You will not have to fetch up the witnesses: the judge will call them, for he knows all about your case; and as he calls up the witnesses, you

will be surprised to find how even the ungodly will be obliged to consent to the just salvation of the righteous. Oh, how the secret deeds and the true heart-sincerity of the righteous, when thus unveiled, will make devils bite their tongues in wrath to think that there was so much of grace given to the sons of men, with which to defeat persecution, to overcome temptation, and to follow on in obedience to the Lord. Oh yes, the deeds, the deeds, the deeds of men—not their prating, not their profession, not their talk, but their deeds (though nobody shall be saved by the merits of his deeds)—their deeds shall be the evidence of their grace, or their deeds shall be the evidence of their unbelief; and so, by their works shall they stand before the Lord, or by their works shall they be condemned as evidence and nothing more.

IV. Now the last point is this: What is the object of this judgment? Will sentence of acquittal and condemnation be given, and then the whole thing be over? Far from it. The judgment is with a view to the thereafter—"That every man may receive the things done in his body." The Lord will grant unto his people an abundant reward for all that they have done. Not that they deserve any reward, but that God first gave them grace to do good works, then took their good works as evidence of a renewed heart, and then gave them a reward for what they had done. Oh, what a bliss it will be to hear it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant,"—to you that have worked for Christ when nobody knew it, to find that Christ took stock of it all,—to you that served the Lord under misrepresentation, to find that the Lord Jesus cleared the chaff away from the wheat, and knew that you were one of his precious ones. For him, then, to say, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord," oh, what a bliss will it be to you.

But to the ungodly how terrible. They are to receive the things that they have done; that is to say, the punishment due,—not every man alike, but the greater sinner the greater doom; to the man who sinned against light a greater damnation than to the man who had not the same light,—Sodom and Gomorrah their place, Tyre and Sidon their place, and then to Capernaum and Bethsaida their place of more intolerable torment, because they had the Gospel and rejected it—so the Lord himself tells us. And the punishment will not only be meted out in proportion to the transgression, but it will be a development of the evil actions done in the evil consequences to be endured, as every man shall eat the fruit of his own ways. Sin, after the natural order, ripens into sorrow. This is not a blind fate, but it is the operation of a divine law, wise and invariable. Oh, how dreadful it will be for the malicious man to have for ever to gnaw his own envious heart, to find his malice come home to him, as birds come home to roost, to hoot for for ever in his own soul; for the lustful man to feel lust burning in every vein, which he can never gratify;—for the drunkard to have a

thirst, which not even a drop of water can allay;—for the glutton who has fared sumptuously every day, to be in hunger perpetually; and the soul that has been wrathful to be for ever wrathful, with the fire of wrath for ever burning like a volcano in his soul; and the rebel against God for ever a rebel, cursing God whom he cannot touch, and finding his curses come back upon himself. There is no punishment worse than for a man who is sinfully disposed to gratify his lusts, to satiate his bad propensities, and to multiply and fatten his vices. Only let men grow into what they would be, and then see what they would be like! Take away the policemen in some parts of London, and give the people plenty of money, and let them do just as they like. Last Saturday, it may be, there were half-a-dozen broken heads, and wives and children were in one general skirmish. Keep those people together: let their vigour continue unimpaired by age or decay, while they keep on developing their characters. Why, they would be worse than a herd of tigers. Let them give way to their rage and anger, with nothing to check their passions; let miserly, greedy people for ever go on with their greed. It makes them miserable here, but let these things be indulged in for ever, and what worse hell do you want? Oh, sin is hell and holiness in heaven. Men will receive the things done in their body. If God has made them love him, they shall go on to love him; if God has made them trust him, they shall go on to trust in him; if God has made them to be like Christ, they shall go on to be like Christ, and they shall receive the things done in their body as a reward; but if a man has lived in sin, "he that is filthy shall be filthy still;" he that has been unbelieving shall be unbelieving still. This, then, shall be the worm that never dieth, and the fire which never shall be quenched, to which shall be added the wrath of God for ever and for ever. Oh, that we may have grace every one of us to flee to Christ! There is our only safety. Simple faith in Jesus is the basis for the character which will evidence at last that you are chosen of God. A simple belief in the merit of the Lord Jesus, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, is the rocky foundation upon which shall be built up, by the same divine hands, the character which shall evidence that the kingdom was prepared for us from before the foundations of the world. God work in us such a character, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON, Matthew XXV.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD BLESSING HIS SAINTS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ye are blessed of the Lord [*or* of JEHOVAH] which made heaven and earth."—Psalm cxv. 15.

WITHOUT any preface (for where there is such a feast before us anything which detains us from the table will be out of place) let us come at once to the delightful words of our text; and may the Holy Spirit lead us into their inner sense!

Here is a blessing spoken of. The Lord that made heaven and earth has been pleased to bless his people. And this blessing has several peculiarities about it, of which we shall speak particularly. It will help us to reach the marrow and fatness of the text, if we consider in detail the orthodox number of five points. First, it is a blessing *belonging to a peculiar people;* secondly, it is a blessing *coming from a peculiar quarter;* thirdly, a blessing *with a peculiar date;* fourthly, a blessing *with a peculiar certainty;* and fifthly, a blessing *involving a peculiar duty.* Where there is so much country to survey we must travel swiftly, and make but a short stay upon any single thought.

I. First, we have before us A BLESSING BELONGING TO A PECULIAR PEOPLE. "Ye are blessed of the Lord." "*Ye.*" Who are these distinguished persons?

We would reply, first, that they are *a people whom God has blessed because he willed to do so.* He has given us no other reason, as the first cause of their being blessed, but the fact that he is good, and that he is sovereign in the distribution of his grace. If you search to the very bottom of things you hear a voice proclaiming these words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." If you go back to the first spring and well-head of all blessing, you shall not find the merits of man as the guardian of the fountain, nor the will of man as the digger of the well; but you shall find there written, "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The will of God alone is the source of the rich, eternal, saving blessing,

which abounds towards the Lord's elect. If ye are blessed of the Lord who made heaven and earth, ye are not a people who claim to have deserved his favour; ye abhor all boasting in self, and ye magnify divine mercy. Free grace is the Shibboleth of the true saints: those who cannot speak out upon that point may well question their lineage. If ye talk of deserving, ye belong to another race; ye are of the seed of Hagar, and belong to Sinai, in Arabia, and therefore ye are under the law and under the curse. No blessing comes to sinners by the way of the law, but the very reverse. They only shall participate in this blessing who receive it by promise and by covenant, being the seed of Abraham by promise, even as Isaac was, who was born not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Glory, then, be to God, at the very outset of our meditations, that he has been pleased to set apart unto himself a people, elect according to his own eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. Of them and of them only has he said, "Ye are blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth." This is true doctrine according to the Scriptures, and the regenerate feel the truth of it confirmed in their own experience.

Furthermore, they are a people to whom this first will of God to bless them has been *certified by countless acts of indisputable love.* Ye who trust that ye are blessed of the Lord, remember how God's blessing has come to you already. It waited for you before *you* were born; ay, it waited for you ere this world was fashioned; from everlasting ye were ordained to this benediction. The covenant of grace was made on your behalf with all its sacred stipulations, and its immutable seals, and immeasurable promises of love. What says the apostle in the first chapter of the Ephesians, verses three and four, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." For you, in the fulness of time, Jesus came to tabernacle among men. Who shall doubt that ye are blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth, since for you the Son of God laid aside his royalties to become the Son of Man? Union with you in your nature was clear evidence that the heart of Christ was with you. Gethsemane and Calvary speak volumes concerning the reality of the blessings which God has given to his chosen, for there they were loved to the death and redeemed by blood. An incarnate God, a Mediator covered with bloody sweat, a Redeemer wounded and slain,—What say you to this? "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," said the apostle; and even so say we. Nor was the gift of Jesus Christ's dying, all; for Jesus' living is still ours; his resurrection teems with the blessings of life and immortality. We are one with him, and he is for ever our Head; and in him, by virtue of his ascension, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and will dwell in us for ever. Through his indwelling we have "an unction from the Holy One," through which we "know all things," being taught of God, and led into all truth according to the office of the gracious Comforter. Meanwhile, we are also raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, while all things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. But, indeed, I am not about to make a catalogue of those gifts which have already

come to us; time would fail, and ability would also be lacking; suffice it to hint them to you, to remind you that if through grace you have received Christ, ye are indeed "blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth," for ten thousand times ten thousand of the choicest gifts have been the seals and testimonials of your heavenly Father's affection towards you.

But, beloved, the peculiar people to whom this blessing comes are, *after their conversion, known by their character.* In due time grace works in them marks of their election—signs of the inward and spiritual grace which the Holy Ghost has implanted. One sign is mentioned in the connection of our text: "He shall bless *them that fear the Lord*, both small and great." So then, if ye fear the Lord, "ye are blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth." Now, to fear him is not merely to tremble before him, fearful lest he should destroy you. Such a fear as that has been found in the hearts of even the vilest of men. We suppose that neither Pharaoh nor Belshazzar was a stranger to that feeling. But this is another fear: the humble worship of God, the sincere reverence of God, the sacred awe which is found even amongst the angels of heaven, the holy admiration which trembles at the infinite majesty of the Most High, not out of slavish dread, but out of a childlike sense of insignificance; this is the sign of inward grace "Blessed is the man that feareth always." The fear of grieving one so loving, of doing aught that should dishonour the name of one so infinitely glorious,—this is the right fear. Have you that fear? Have you the fear that makes you confess your past sins,—the fear that makes you dread going into such sin again,—the fear that makes you mourn because you nailed the Saviour to the tree, and the fear that makes you tremble lest you should crucify the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame? This is not the fear which perfect love casts out, or the fear which hath torment, but a sweet fear, as we have said before, which may be felt, even in heaven itself, where they sing, "Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name." It was to such as these that a voice came out of the excellent glory, saying, "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great" (Rev. xix. 5). "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments."

And it is very sweet to notice that *this benediction is common to all Godfearing persons*,—"both small and great;" and the small are put first, lest they should think they are forgotten. I see many little children here this evening. Oh, if you fear God, if you pray to God, if you trust in Jesus, and if your young hearts have been taught to love God, small as you are, you are the blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth. Jesus loves to receive children to his bosom, as much now as ever he did when he lived upon earth. Come to him by faith and he will bless you. There are here many young enquirers who have only just begun to pray, and who are betwixt hope and fear, like new-born children whose lives tremble in the balances; to them it must be cheering to observe that the Lord blesses the "small" as well as the "great." The Lord regardeth the contrite in spirit, and he hears the groanings of broken hearts; his delight is to bless the lowly in mind. Though grace be small in you, yet he will not quench the

smoking flax. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And ye poor in this world, ye humble, ye illiterate, ye obscure, ye sickly ones, ye with little talent and slender opportunity for serving God, I pray you rejoice in the assurance of the text, for ye are the blessed of the Lord, if ye walk before him in holy fear. The eye that looks to God and trusts him even when it cannot see him, is a blessed eye; the heart that pines after God even when it cannot rejoice in him, is a blessed heart; and the hand that stretches itself out after God, saying, "Oh that I knew where I might find him," is still a blessed hand, even though for the moment it cannot lay hold upon the word of promise. If thou dost sigh and cry after God with a true heart, looking to him in his own way, through Christ his Son, thou art numbered with those that fear the Lord, who are blessed of him whether they be small or great.

Now, all *this is very sweet to those who fear God.* To them it is peculiarly precious to know that they are blessed of the Lord, because they know they deserve to have been cursed. A sense of wrath due to sin imparts a rare sweetness to the divine favour. Did you ever hear the roar of Sinai's thunder in your ear? If so, you will never forget it to your dying day; and even in eternity it will impart an additional melody to the music of the cross. I would to God that some Christians were ploughed a little more before they were sown, for I notice that the flimsiness and superficiality of the religion which is common now-a-days, arises mainly from the lack of deep self-knowledge and solemn personal conviction that they were themselves utterly lost and ruined. I fear many have made but poor students in the University of theology, because they were never well-grounded in the school of repentance. I am astonished that we should live to hear from a noncomformist pulpit that the fall of man was a fiction! I make bold to say that the religion of the man who could utter such a speech, is a fiction beyond all question. What knows he about the things of God, when he does not even know the things of man? Let him get back to his God in penitence, and ask to be taught aright; for he who knows not the fall of man, does not know the uplifting by free grace. If he knows not the disease, he is a wretched physician, and is sure to mistake the remedy. He who has once known the curse, and smarted under it, loves the wine and oil of the blessing, for by it his bleeding wounds were stanched. The blessing of the Lord is as dew to the mown grass, and as showers to the parched soil; it is life itself, and the essence of heaven.

Moreover, the child of God knows the sweetness of the blessing, because the effect of the curse is, in a measure, upon him still,—not the judicial curse, for that was laid upon Christ, and has gone for ever; but the plague of his own heart, the remains of sin within, often make him feel that it is a dreadful thing to have been a sinner, even now he is pardoned and "accepted in the Beloved." Oh, the Amalekites and Canaanites that still dwell in the land; what a nuisance they are! What "thorns in our eyes," as Joshua calls them! A strong expression indeed! They are worse than a thorn in the flesh. Sin is a thorn in the eye to the believer. But to know that though I fight daily with corruptions, and have to mourn an evil heart of unbelief, yet I am blessed of the Lord that

made heaven and earth, for all that—is not that bliss? Oh, the sweetness of that word to a heart which has been sorely tempted!

Besides, the child of God, in addition to what he feels within, is often called to suffer the curses of the world and the curses of Satan. If ye are of the world, the world will love its own, but if ye are not of the world, the world will hate you; but though at times, under misrepresentations and slanders and cruel accusations, you will feel that you are shamefully entreated, this truth will gloriously sustain you—"Ye are blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth." The bitterness of persecution is gone when this is realised. Your faithful soul learns to say, Let them curse on if they will, let Balak go from mountain to mountain and kill his bullocks and his rams, and call upon Balaam to curse the people of God; yet surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel. They may cast their spells and invoke the demons as they will, but if the Lord has blessed the people, blessed are they. Blessed be God, if we have once received this benediction from our Great Father's hand, all the maledictions of the Pope or the devil, or all the wicked men on earth, shall not affright our spirit! God's blessing shall silence all.

Thus have I spoken upon the peculiar people chosen by sovereign grace, receiving perpetual tokens of love, known by their character, all of them receiving the blessing, whether great or small, and all of them finding that blessing inexpressibly sweet.

II. Now, secondly, this is A BLESSING FROM A PECULIAR QUARTER. "Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth."

This is a blessing *from one peculiarly related to us*, and therefore it is the more to be prized. We are glad to get a father's blessing: let no man think little of it. A father's curse might wither a man If in any case it has been justly earned, I pity the poor wretch who wears it like the mark of Cain upon his soul; for him the sun has no smiling beams, and the cloud no silver lining, the past no comfortable memories, the future no joyful prospects. A mother's blessing, how like the breath of cloudless morn, foretelling a day of peace; a brother's blessing, how bright with sacred dew, like that which gemmed old Hermon's woods. The blessing of saintly men and holy women, who shall set a price upon it? Its merchandise is far above silver. In the olden times, paternal benedictions were more thought of than they are now, and the change is not the fruit of greater wisdom. Verily, the blessing of a child of God, I reckon to be a portion of my true wealth, and I love you, brethren, for wishing me God-speed. Happy is the man whom good men love to bless. But, ah, beloved, if you are blessed of the Lord, you have a diviner benediction: you have the blessing which maketh rich indeed, true and lasting, potent, and effectual; the blessing of your Father who is in heaven. All other blessings are only blessings in proportion as they contain the essence of this blessing; God's blessing is the sea, and others are but drops; that is the sun, and others are but sparks.

The blessing spoken of comes not from an idol-god. The psalm leads us to make that observation. The gods of the heathen had mouths, but they spake not; ears, but they heard not: any benediction from them would be a mockery: but the children of God are not blessed of Baal or Ashtaroth, but of Jehovah, the self-existent Lord of all! They receir

no benediction from the priest who ministers at the shrine of a dumb god of silver, or a dead god of flour and water. Compared with the benediction of the Lord who made heaven and earth, what a paltry thing is the blessing of a priest! Indeed, he is utterly impotent to bless. If he has any power, it lies in the opposite direction. He can curse the victims of his false teaching, but he cannot benefit them. His *pax vobiscum* is not worth the time spent in the speaking it, his plenary indulgence defiles the paper it is written on. A priest's blessing and a cockatrice's egg are of equal valne. But to be blessed of Jehovah is a reality, as saith the Psalmist, "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."

The benediction mentioned in our text *comes from the omnipotent Creator*, "who made heaven and earth." This intimates that the blessing is almighty in power. Have I the blessing of him who said, "Let there be light," and there was light? Then he can speak into my darkness, and cheer the gloom of my despair. Does the blessing of him who brought order out of chaos rest upon me? then he can speak to the confusion of my circumstances, and the turmoil of my desponding mind, and charm all things into harmony. The blessing of him who clothed the earth with beauty, piled the hills, and digged the channels of the sea, must have in it a fulness unrivalled. A blessing from him—how large it must be—how potent for all the purposes of grace: a blessing from him with whom there is no obstacle or difficulty, who shall be able to delay it or deprive me of it? The Lord who made heaven and earth, spake, and it was done: he commanded, and it stood fast. There was darkness, but it fled before him, there was confusion but it vanished at a glance of his eye; and if God hath blessed thee, Christian, whatever standeth in thy way shall disappear before the benediction of thy God. If he blesseth, poverty cannot starve thee, sickness cannot kill thee, toil cannot wear the out, sorrow cannot consume thee, life cannot allure thee, death cannot slay thee, hell cannot enclose thee. If he blesseth, "neither things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature," can have power to harm thee. If all the legions of hell were armed, and stood in thy way, and all were furious to destroy, yet in the name of God thou couldst defy them, for his benediction would be both shield and spear to thee. Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

It is a blessing *from the All-wise One* "who made heaven and earth." Do not forget that the making of heaven and earth is not merely a display of power, but of infinite wisdom. Think of all the skill which has guided the stars in their courses, and of the wonderful wisdom which has created all things that be, and has sustained them in their various spheres. Now, the Lord who blesseth thee, Oh heir of heaven, is the infinitely wise One. He knows the intricacies of thy course, and he will steer thee through them. Though the channel of the river of thy life flow close to yonder sand-bank, and then by the rock upon the other side, and though no earthly pilot can thread the mazes of that dangerous stream, yet *he* hath blessed thee, who knoweth all things, and with

his hand upon the helm of thy vessel he will bring thee safe into the haven. Therefore do not fear. Thou art not blessed of an erring creature, nor of a man like thyself; thou art blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth. Is there any searching of his understanding? Hath he not balanced the clouds in judgment? Hath he not in wisdom laid the corner stone of the universe? Why sayest thou, then, "My circumstances have been overlooked by him, and the problem of my case will be too difficult for him to solve?" Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him for thou art blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth, whose infallible counsels shall conduct thine affairs to a blessed issue.

Let this console thee—thou art blessed of him who made thee, and, therefore, knows how to anoint every wheel of thine inner workmanship with the sacred oil of his grace. Take that thought into thy spirit too, he made heaven and earth, and, therefore, thou art never out of his domain. We read of him that *he hath a desire to the work of his own hands.* He hath made thee, and he will not leave thee. Dost thou leave thy children? Dost thou forget thine offspring? Hast thou not heard that a woman may forget, and may fail to have compassion upon the suckling of her own breast, but God cannot and will not forget thee. He will be mindful of thee, for as man, and especially as regenerated man, thou art one of the noblest works of his hands.

I know not how to speak upon so great a text as this, but I know how to drink its sweetness down into my very soul, and to feel that, being blessed of God, all other things matter not. Sick and sorry, or well and rejoicing—there is not a pin to choose so long as we are blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth. Rich or poor, famous or despised, a throne or a martyr's stake, a palace or a dungeon—truly, there is not the turn of a hair between them, if we are blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth. If this sweet blessing could fall upon a soul in hell, it would be a heaven to it; and could the blessing of the Lord that made heaven and earth be taken away from the saints in heaven, heaven would be a hell to them. Our heart can sing with the psalmist—

> "Let the ungodly race advance,
> And boast of all their store;
> The Lord is my inheritance,
> My soul can wish no more."

The blessing of the Lord that made heaven and earth is all in all.

III. Let us turn to the third word, which is this: IT IS A BENEDICTION WITH A PECULIAR DATE; for it is in the present tense. The preceding verses spoke of the past and the future. "The Lord *hath been* mindful of us, he *will* bless us. He *will* bless the house of Israel. He *will* bless the house of Aaron." These are blessed "wills." "He *will* bless them that fear him, both small and great. The Lord *shall* increase you more and more, both you and your children." These are all in the future, but you know the proverb saith a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Now, those future blessings, those birds in the bush, I know not what they are worth, for they are boundless in preciousness; but here is a bird in the hand, "Ye *are* blessed of the Lord." Oh, the value of that! Ye are at this moment blessed of the Lord that

made heaven and earth. This verb is in the present tense, and, indeed, it may be said to be in all the tenses put together, in a tense that is not a tense, a time that hath no time, but lasteth on evermore, till time shall be no more.

This blessing *embraces all circumstances.* You are laid low and pining away with consumption, but "You are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth." You are smitten down in the very heyday of your usefulness, and laid aside, but "you are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth." You had your oxen and your cattle seized, and now you are, like Job, a penniless beggar, fit to sit on a dunghill, but "you are blessed of the Lord." Your enemy has set his foot upon your neck, and he swears that he will make a speedy end of you, but "you are blessed of the Lord" Like Jeremiah, you are shut up in the dark dungeon, and you sink in the mire, and there seems to be no helper, but "you are blessed of the Lord." Who shall say that John Bunyan in Bedford Gaol was not "blessed of the Lord"? Who shall say that Rowland Taylor, when he went to be burnt on Hadleigh Heath, was not "blessed of the Lord" when his very face shone with sacred joy? Ah, let me tell you that the worst places on earth bear the best evidence of the goodness of God to his people. God's birds sing best in cages, and like nightingales they sing best in the dark, and often, according to the old fable, their note is sweetest when the thorn pierces their breast. They are independent of outward circumstances, except that, the worse the circumstances, often the greater their joy. Glory be to God for this. They are "blessed of the Lord" that made heaven and earth, let them be where they may and as they may. Though they seem cast out from God's presence, and all his waves and billows go over them, yet if they fear the Lord they are "blessed of the Lord" even then. Oh, that your faith may lay hold of this when you are very sorely exercised, for happy is the man whom God correcteth, and blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord!

Observe that our text reaches to *all time and beyond all time,* because it runs thus: "Ye are blessed of the Lord that made *heaven and earth.*" While I am on earth, this shall console me: "I am blessed of the Lord that made the earth," and he himself has said of his servants, "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shall thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." When I have to go out of this earth into another world, this shall console me · "I am blessed of the Lord that made heaven." I shall still dwell in a place which my Father made. I am not going into a foreign country when I leave the warm precints of this house of clay. I shall emigrate to the country where flowers never fade, and winter never chills. This poor earth is little better than a penal settlement. It is a fair and beautiful and lovely earth to those who have eyes and taste with which to appreciate its scenery, but to our spiritual man it is just a smoke-dried tent of Kedar, a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, a casual ward for wayfarers, or very little better,—a great charnel. "Woe's me that I in Mesec am a sojourner so long." We long to be away to our

own fair country, and see the Well-beloved face to face. Yet, for all that, God made this world, though man has spoilt it as much as ever he can; and the God who made this world has blessed us; so that wherever we go about in the world, we should feel that we have a blessing that is suitable for every position in it—suitable for that lowly cot on the moor, suitable for that scant room in the dark alley, suitable for the couch of ease, and suitable for the hard bed where pain racks every bone. The Lord that made earth, and who has a hand in it still, has blessed us. And then it is the Lord that "made heaven." Why, these two words are meant to encompass all creation. They are intended to take in the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, the east and the west, the north and the south, the rising and the setting sun, the sea and the dry land, the heights and the depths; they are meant to encompass all. Here we have the true way of making the best of both worlds. God's blessing here and hereafter makes existence bliss. Oh be joyful! In whatever condition you are cast, you are blessed by God in that condition; and into whatever place you may come, you are blessed by God with mercies needful for the place. The heathens used to be afraid that, though they might have the blessing of the god of the hills, if they went into the valleys they would not have his blessing there, for their god might not be the god of the valleys; but our God is the God of every place, and every scene, and every circumstance, and we are blessed of him; glory be to his holy name.

IV. Now, fourthly and briefly, this is A BLESSING WITH A PECULIAR CERTAINTY. Scripture does not lie, or utter *perhapses*, and *ifs*, and *buts*. "Ye *are* blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth."

Oh, ye that fear God, this is a matter of fact, ye daily and continually abide under a true and real blessing. Some blessings are vain words: the utterer is a hypocrite. Other blessings are sincere, but the person pronouning them has no power to fulfil them. Such blessings are wells without water, or barren figtrees bearing leaves but no fruit. The Lord blesses *not in word only*, but in deed; not in futile wishes, but in omnipotent acts. We may fail to obtain the benedictions which our friends invoke upon us, but God's blessings are sure to all the seed. Failure and miscarriage never occur to the Lord our God. Many are the slips between cups and lips at this world's banquet, but the chalice of divine blessing shall surely reach the lip of the elect soul.

This is thy will, that in thy love
We ever should abide;
And lo, we earth and hell defy
To make thy counsel void.
Not one of all the chosen race
But shall to heaven attain;
Partake on earth the purposed grace,
And then with Jesus reign.

Now, beloved, let us make sure of this blessing, which is so sure. And how can we do so but by faith? We believe that God has blessed all those to whom he has given his dear Son; and he has given his dear Son to me if I believe in Jesus. As surely as I believe in him the blessing is mine. Grip it, brother. Make sure of it. Let no

man deceive you with vain words. In these times it is hard to find anybody who believes anything. Even the common history we learned at school is now suspected to be a myth. I do not think that you could, according to the modes of reasoning adopted in these sceptical days, be able to prove that you had either a father or a mother. Nothing is certain now-a-days—nothing at all; the floods of doubt have carried all away We are taught from the pulpit to doubt. The old gospel was, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." The new gospel is, "He that doubts and is sprinkled shall be saved." A sorry come down for both the words. But, beloved, we have not so learned the gospel: we have learned to believe, and hope still to live by faith. Our beliefs are grounded too firmly to be shaken by fashionable quibbling. Do thou get a fast hold, my brother! Thou sayest, "How can I?" Why, thou canst do it by believing the veracity of thy God—believing that surely he who speaks can fulfil what he has said. And thou canst get thy faith strengthened by experience. Try thy God: I mean, when he is trying thee, trust him and test his promise. Prove him, and see if he do not bless thee. Fair-weather Christianity is all very well, but it is stormy-weather Christianity that proves a man to be truly a man of God. Canst thou trust God when the cupboard is bare? Canst thou rejoice in God when every nerve of thy body is made to throb with pain? Canst thou stand beneath a burden that might have made Atlas bow down to the earth, and feel that strength divine is equal to all that and ten thousand times more? Couldst thou fling thyself, like a Samson, unarmed, upon a thousand foes, and smite them, because the Lord was in thee? If thou canst, thou wilt have no trouble about this scepticism and these questions and doubts. Thou wilt know the Lord's truth, for thou hast proved it: thou wilt know his love, for thou rejoicest in it: thou wilt know his faithfulness, for it is the pillow of thy weary head: thou wilt know his immutability, for it is the anchor of thy poor tempest-tossed bark: thou wilt know that thou art blessed of God that made heaven and earth. May God grant us to know it by the witness of his Holy Spirit,—to know it more and more by living more and more by faith, for only so shall we know it,—to know it by despising everything else in comparison with it, and relishing it and prizing it above all the delicacies that can be put upon the tables of worldlings. "Blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth"—may we be as assured of this as we are of our existence. Then shall we be "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

V. The fifth point is, THIS BLESSING INVOLVES A PECULIAR DUTY, for, if God has blessed us, the succeeding duty is that we should bless him. Note the eighteenth verse,—"We *will* bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore."

Come, then, beloved, if God has blessed us let us bless him· let us answer to his benediction as the Alpine echo to the horn. I am afraid we are not very abundant in blessing and glorifying God. What were you doing before you came hither? What was your last word at home? Grumbling? Complaining? Very likely. Is this becoming in one whom God has blessed? What were your thoughts before you came here? Dolefully expecting something terrible to happen by-and by? Mourning you know not why! Was that it? If so, is this a fit state of mind for one on whom the divine benediction rests like a halo! What were your words on the road hither? Let me guess again. Some silly chat? Some idle tale? Some frivolous joke? Is this worthy of your destiny; an employment suitable for your rank? Brother, we have had enough of all this. If your murmuring in times past has not sufficed, I am greatly in error; if you have not frightened yourself enough about things that have never happened, I am indeed mistaken; and if you have not wasted enough breath in idle talk, I am bereft of judgment. Now, from this day forth let us see if we cannot bless the Lord continually. Speak to one another, ye children of God; speak well of his dear name, who has so richly endowed you. Let us tell one another what God has done for us, saying, "Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." "I don't know what I can say," says somebody. Did God never do anything for you? Then begin to pray for his blessing at once, for without it you are a miserable creature. But if he has been favourable to you, tell your fainting brethren how he has restored you. Tell your sinking friend how you felt a solid bottom beneath your foot, when you went through deeper rivers than those which he is passing through. Tell others what thou hast tasted and handled, not what thou dost not know, for borrowed experience is poor stuff and savours of imposition. The psalm says, "Praise him from this time forth." If the past has been marred by any other talk, now "from this time" bless the Lord. Wash thy mouth of all complaining, take the cup of gratitude to sweeten thy soul, and bless his name from this time forth. What, dumb till now? An heir of heaven speechless? May a sight of God's blessing open thy mouth. From this time forth begin to bless him. 'Tis a good time in which to begin blessing God. This moment is a fair season for repentance. When was there a time that was unsuitable for adoring gratitude? And when was there an hour when it was not well to bless God? I beseech you join me in praising him!

Then the psalmist resolves to praise the Lord "for evermore." Our adoration of God is never to cease. As long as there is breath in our body let us praise him who gives it to us. "*Dum spiro spero*," said the heathen, "While I breathe, I hope." But the Christian says, "*Dum*

expiro spero," "When I die, I will still hope in God." While we exist we will adore.

"My God, I'll praise thee while I live,
And praise thee when I die;
And praise thee when I rise again,
And to eternity."

Repeat the joyous strain. Cease not day nor night. Nothing of worldly business deserves so much attention as to warrant our ceasing to bless and magnify the Lord in our hearts.

Now, I pray God that some here who have never received the divine blessing after the tenor of the text, may be led to seek it; and you know his word: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh, that gracious word, "abundantly pardon!" How it meets our abundant sin. Oh, for his attracting love to operate upon sinners' hearts!

May he draw you to himself for Christ's sake, and bless you, even you who hitherto have slighted his mercy. He delights to be gracious. He loves to call her beloved that was not beloved, and to make them a people that were not a people. Catch at that word, ye humble and contrite, and never rest till the Lord himself smile upon you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxv.; Isaiah xliv. 9—20.

[Next week's Sermon will be entitled "*The Saints Blessing the Lord*," and thus the subject will be continued.]

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SAINTS BLESSING THE LORD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."—Psalm ciii. 1.

YOU see here a man talking to himself, a soul with all his soul talking to his soul. Every speaker should learn to soliloquise. His own soul is the first audience a good man ought to think of preaching to. Before we address ourselves to others we should lecture within the doors of our own heart. Indeed, if any man desires to excite the hearts of others in any given direction, he must first stir up himself upon the same matter. He who would make others grateful must begin by saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." David had never risen to the height of saying "Bless the Lord, ye his angels;" or "Bless the Lord, all his works;" if he had not first tuned his own voice to the gladsome music. No man is fit to be a conductor in the choirs of holy song until he has learned himself to sing the song of praise. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," is the preacher's preparation in the study, without which he must fail in the pulpit. Self-evident as this is, many persons need to be reminded of it; for they are ready enough to admonish others, but forget that true gratitude to God must, like charity, begin at home. There is an old proverb which saith, "The cobbler's wife goes barefoot," and I am afraid this is too often the case in morals and religion. Preachers ought especially to be jealous of themselves in this particular, lest, whilst they are crying aloud to other men to magnify the Lord, they should be shamefully silent themselves. I would this morning glow with the sacred flame of personal thankfulness while I call upon you to bless the holy name of Jehovah, our God. But what is true of preachers is true of all other workers. The tendency among men is, when they grow a little earnest, to expend their zeal upon other people, and frequently in the way of fault-finding. It is wonderfully easy to wax indignant at the indolence, the divisions, the coldness, or the errors of the Christian church, and to fulminate our little bulls against her, declaring her to be weighed in our balances and found wanting,

as if it mattered one halfpenny to the church what the verdict of our imperfect scales might be. Why, instead of a tract upon the faults of the church, at the present moment, it would be easy to write a folio volume; and when it was written it would be wise to put it in the fire. Friend, mind those beams in your own eye, and leave the Lord Jesus to clear the motes from the eye of his church. Begin at home; there is in-door work to be done. Instead of vainly pointing to the faults of others, pour forth thine earnestness in praising God, and say thou unto thine own heart, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within *me*, bless his holy name."

You observe that this preacher, with an audience of one, has a very choice subject: he is exhorting himself to bless God. Now, in a certain sense it is not possible for us to bless God. He blesses us, and in the same sense we cannot bless him. He hath all things,—what can we give to him? When we have given our best we are compelled to confess, "Of thine own have we given unto thee." But we bless him by being thankful, by extolling him for the gifts he has bestowed, by loving him in consequence of his bounty towards us, and by allowing these emotions of our mind to influence our life, so that we speak well of his name, and act so as to glorify him among our fellow men. In these ways we can bless God, and we know that he accepts such attempts, poor and feeble though they be. God is pleased with our love and thankfulness; and so, speaking after the manner of men, he is blessed by his children's desires and praises.

Note that the Psalmist stirred himself up to bless God's *name*, by which is meant his character; though indeed we may take the word literally, for every name of God is a reason for thankfulness. We will praise Jehovah, the self-existent: we will praise El, the mighty God whose power is on our side; we will praise him who gives himself the covenant name of Elohim, and reveals therein the Trinity of his sacred unity; we will praise the Shaddai, the all-sufficient God, and magnify him, because out of his fulness have we all received. And whatever other name there be in Scripture, or combination of names, every one shall be exceeding delightful to our hearts, and we will bless the sacred name. We will bless the Father, from whose everlasting love we received our election unto eternal life; the Father, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead. We bless the Father of our spirits, who hath given to us an inheritance amongst all them that are set apart. And we bless the Son of God, Jesus our Saviour, Christ,—anointed to redeem. Our heart dances for joy at every remembrance of him. There is not a name of Jesus Christ's person, or offices, or relationships, which we would forget to bless. Whether he be Immanuel, Jesus, or the Word; whether he be Prophet, Priest or King; whether he be brother, husband or friend; whatever name beseems his beloved person is dear to us, and we will bless him under it. And the Holy Ghost too,—our Comforter, the Paraclete, the heavenly Dove, who dwells within our hearts in infinite condescension, whom heaven cannot contain, but yet who finds a habitation within the bodies of his servants, which are his temples—we will assuredly praise him. Each

one of his influences shall evoke from us grateful praise,—if he be like the wind—we will be as Æolian harps; if he be dew—we will bloom with flowers; if he be flame—we will glow with ardour; if he be oil—our faces shall shine. In whatever way he moves upon us we will be responsive to his voice; and while he blesses us we will bless his holy name.

But if the very name of God be thus blessed to us, certainly the character which lies beneath the name shall be inexpressibly delightful. Select any attribute of God you will, and it is a reason for our loving him. Is he immutable?—blessed be his name, he loves everlastingly. Is he infinite?—then glory be to him, it is infinite affection which he has bestowed upon us. Is he omnipotent?—then will he put forth all his power for his own beloved. Is he wise?—then he will not err, nor fail to bring us safely to our promised rest. Is he gracious?—then in that grace we find our comfort and defence;—whatever there is in God, known or unknown, we will bless. My God! I cannot apprehend thee with my understanding, but I comprehend thee with my affections; and so, if I cannot know thee all in my mind, I love thee altogether in my heart; my intellect is too narrowed to contain thee, but my heart expands herself to the infinity of thy majesty, and loves thee, whatever thou mayest be. Thou art unknown in great measure, but thou art not unloved of my poor heart. Thus the Psalmist calls upon us to bless the Lord.

I would like to dwell upon that emphatic word in his exhortation—his *holy* name. Only a holy man can delight in holy things. Holiness is the terror of unholy men; they love sin and count it liberty, but holiness is to them a slavery. If we be saints we shall bless God for his holiness, and be glad that in him there is no spot nor flaw; without iniquity, just and right is he. Even to save his people he would not violate his law; even to deliver his own beloved from going down into the pit he would not turn away from the paths of equity. "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth," is the loftiest cry of cherubims and seraphims in their perfect bliss; it is a joyous song both to the saints on earth and those in heaven. The pure in heart gaze on the divine holiness with awe-struck joy.

Having thus expounded the words briefly, we will now come to the main point of the exhortation. The Psalmist stirs us up to bless God with our whole being, and I pray the Holy Ghost to bring us to that condition this morning. Upon that part of the exhortation we shall now dwell.

I. And our first remark shall be, that this exhortation is REMARKABLY COMPREHENSIVE. "Bless the Lord, O my soul:"—there is the unity of our nature; "and all that is within me,"—there are the diverse powers and faculties which make up the variety of our nature. The unity and the diversity are both summoned to the delightful employment of magnifying God.

First, *the unity of our nature* is here bidden, in its concentration, to yield its whole self to the praise of God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul,"—he means thereby not his lips only, not his hands upon the harp strings, not his eyes uplifted towards heaven, but his soul, his very self, his truest self. Never let me present to God the outward

and superficial alone, but let me render to him the inner and the sincere; let me never bring before him merely the outward senses which my soul uses, but the soul which uses these instrumental faculties. No whitewashed sepulchres will please the Lord,—"Bless the Lord, O my soul,"—Let the true *Ego* praise him, the essential I, the vital personality, the soul of my soul, the life of my life! Let me be true to the core to my God; let that which is most truly my own vitality spend itself in blessing the Lord. The soul is our best self; we must not merely bless the Lord with our body, which will soon become worm's meat, and is but dust at its best; but with our inner, ethereal nature, which makes us akin to angels,—yea, that which causes it to be said that in the image of God we were created. My spiritual nature, my loftiest powers must magnify God,—not the voice which sings a hypocritical magnificat, but the heart which means it;—not the lips which cry Hosanna thoughtlessly,—but the mind which considers and intelligently worships. Not alone this little narrow walk of my body would I fill with song, but the infinite,—through which my spirit soars on wings of boundless thought!—I would make that shoreless region vocal with Jehovah's praise. My real self, my best self, shall bless the Lord. But the soul is also our immortal self, that which will out-last time; and, being redeemed by precious blood, shall pass through judgment and enter into the worlds unknown, for ever to dwell at the right hand of God triumphant in his eternal love. My immortal soul, what hast thou to do with spending thine energies upon mortal things? Wilt thou hunt for fleeting shadows, whilst thou art thyself most real and abiding? Wilt thou heap up bubbles, whilst thou thyself wilt endure for ever, in a life coeval with the existence of God himself, for he hath given thee eternal life in his Son Jesus? Bless the Lord then,—so noble a thing as thou art shouldst not be occupied with less worthy matters. Raise thyself on all thy wings, and like the six-winged cherubim adore thy God.

But the words suggest yet another meaning,—the soul is our active self, our vigour, our intensity. When we speak of a man's throwing his soul into a thing, we mean that he does it with all his might. We say, "There is no soul in him," by which we do not mean that the man does not live, but that he has no vigour or force of character, no love, no zeal. My intensest nature shall bless the Lord. Not with bated breath and a straitened energy will I lisp forth his praises, but I will pour them forth vehemently and ardently in volumes of impassioned song. Never serve God with a hand loath for labour, which would fain withdraw itself if it dare. If thou do thine own business in a lax fashion, yet do not God's business so. If thou go to sleep over anything let it be over thy money-making, or thy buying and selling, but evermore be awake in thy service of the Lord. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" If ever thou art thoroughly awakened, awake now! If ever thou wast all life, all emotion, all energy, all enthusiasm, enter into the same condition again. Let every part be full of ardour, sensitive with emotion, nerved with impulse, borne upward by resolution, impelled by onward force! As Samson, when he smote the Philistines hip and thigh, used every muscle, sinew, and bone of his body in crushing his adversaries, so do thou serve God with all and every force thou hast. "Bless the

Lord, O my soul!" O God, my hand, my tongue, my mind, my heart shall all adore thee:

"Every string shall have its attribute to sing."

My united, concentrated, entire being shall bless thee, thou infinitely glorious Jehovah!

I pray you, my brethren, either do not pretend to praise God at all, or praise him with all your might. If you are Christian people, be out and out Christians or let Christianity alone. None hinder the glorious kingdom of Christ so much as these half-and-half men, who blow hot and cold with the self-same breath. My brethren, be thorough; plunge into this stream of life as bathers do who dive to the very bottom, and swim in the broad stream with intense delight. Do this, or else make no profession.

But, then, David speaks of *the diverse faculties of our nature*, and writes, "All that is within me bless his holy name." I think the Psalm itself, if we had time to comment upon it, might suggest in succession all our mental powers and passions. For instance, when he said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," he meant, of course, first of all let the heart bless him; for that is often synonymous with the soul. The affections are to lead the way in the concert of praise. But the psalmist intended next to bestir the memory, for he goes on to say "forget not all his benefits." May I ask you, beloved friends, now to recollect what God has done for you. Thread the jewels of his grace upon the thread of memory, and hang them about the neck of praise. Canst thou count the leaves of the forest in autumn, or number the small dust of the threshing floor? Then, canst thou give the sum of his lovingkindnesses? For mercies beyond count, praise him without stint. Then let your conscience praise him, for the psalm proceeds to say, "who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Conscience once weighed thy sins and condemned thee; now let it weigh the Lord's pardon and magnify his grace to thee. Count the purple drops of Calvary, and say, "Thus my sins were washed away." Let thy conscience praise the Sin-bearer, who has caused it to flow with peace like a river, and to abound in righteousness as the waves of the sea. Let thy emotions join the sacred choir, for thou hast this day, if thou art like the psalmist, many feelings of delight; bless him "who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies, and who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles." Is all within you peaceful, to-day? Sing some sweet pastoral, like the twenty-third psalm. Let the calm of your spirit sound forth the praises of the Lord upon the pleasant harp and the psaltery. Do your days flow smoothly? Then consecrate the dulcimer to the Lord. Are you joyful, this day? Do you feel the exhilaration of delight? Then praise ye the Lord with the timbrel and dance. On the other hand, is there a contention within? does conflict disturb your mind? Then praise him with the sound of the trumpet, for he will go forth with you to the battle. When you return from the battle and divide the spoil, then "praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals." Whatever emotional state thy soul be found in, let it lead thee to bless thy Maker's holy name.

Perhaps, however, just now your thoughts exceed your emotions, for you have been considering the providence of God as you have read the histories of nations and seen their rise and fall: you have watched the hand of God in men's lives. So also did David, and he sang, "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." Let thy judgment praise the Judge of all the earth; let every day's newspaper give thee fresh matter for praise: every Christian should so read the paper, or not at all. God's praise is the true end of history; his providence is the pith and marrow of all the stories of the empires of the past. To the man of understanding the centuries are stanzas of a divine epic, whereof the great subject is the Lord of Hosts in his excellency.

Do not forget to bring thy knowledge to thine aid in thy song. Thou hast the Scriptures, and thou hast the Spirit to teach thee their inner sense; therefore, you can soar above David when he sang, "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel." He hath made known his Son unto thee, and in thee, therefore glorify him. The harvests of the fields of knowledge should be stored in the garners of adoration. Even our human learning should be laid at the Lord's foot, for the vessels of the tabernacle were made of the gold which Israel brought out of the land of Egypt. We would make each rivulet of knowledge swell our gratitude. Believer, know not anything which thou canst not consecrate, or else loathe to know it. Whatever fruits, new or old, are stored in thy memory, let them be all laid up for the Beloved and none else. Knowledge should supply the spices and love the flame, and so the censer of worship should always smoke with fragrant perfume.

Be sure, too, that thy faculty of wonder be used in holy things; let thine astonishment bless God. Thou canst not measure the distance from the east to the west, thou art lost in the immensity before thee; but Oh, bless God with thy wonder, as thou seest thy sins thus far removed from thee. Thou canst not tell how high the heavens are above the earth, but let thine astonishment at the greatness of creation lead thee to adoration, for so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. Ah, and thy very fears, let them bow low before the Lord. Dost thou fear because thou art frail? He remembereth that we are dust. Dost thou tremble at the thought of death? Then praise him who spares thee, though thou art before him as a flower of the field withered by the wind when it passeth over thee. Magnify from a sense of thine insignificance the splendour of that condescending love which pities thee, even "as a father pitieth his children." As for thy hopes, sweet are their voices, let them not remain silent; as they peer into the future let them sing, for "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." What more could hope desire to make her rouse her choicest minstrelsy? By-and-by we shall be where even the last verses of the Psalm will not be above our experience, for we shall see the Lord upon that throne which he has prepared in the heavens, and then we will bid angels that excel in strength, and all the heavenly ministry, to bless the Lord. Happy are we as we anticipate the day, and, filled with expectation, cry aloud, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

I think you will now perceive that, if time permitted, we could bring out every single mental faculty, and show that David has given it scope, as though this psalm were the working out of a problem, and practically showed how each particular power of the soul can praise God.

Brethren, we cannot longer tarry on this point. You know, each of you, what faculty you possess in the greatest strength. I pray you use it for God. You know which phase your soul is in just now; bless God while you are in that mood, whatever it be. "*All* that is within me," says the text,—then let it be all. Some of us have a vein of humour, and though we try to keep it under restraint it will peep out. What then? Why let us make it bear the Lord's yoke. This faculty is not necessarily common or unclean: let it be made a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the Lord. On the other hand, some of you have a touch of despondency in your nature: take care to subdue it to the Lord's praise. You are the men to sing those grave melodies which in some respects are the pearls of song. A little pensiveness is good flavouring. The muse is at her best when she is pleasingly melancholy. Praise God, my brethren, as you are. Larks must not refrain from singing because they are not nightingales, nor must the sparrow refuse to chirp because he cannot emulate the linnet. Let every tree of the Lord's planting praise the Lord; clap your hands, ye trees of the wood, while fruitful trees and all cedars join in his praise. Both young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the name of the Lord, each one in his peculiar note; for ye are all needful to the perfect harmony. The Lord would not have you borrow your brother's tones, but use "*all that is within you*," all that is peculiar to your own idiosyncracy, for his glory. Spend all your strength, ay, every atom of it; keep back nothing, but render *all* that is *within* you unto him. If all that is within you be the Lord's, all that is *without* you, which is yours, will also be his. All your bodily faculties will praise him, and the outer life will be all for God. Let your house praise him. Beneath its roof may there ever be an altar to the God of all the families of Israel. Let your table praise him; learn to eat and drink to his glory. Let your bed praise him;—let the bells upon the horses be holiness unto the Lord;—let the very garments that you wear, seeing they are the gifts of his charity, commend the Lord to your praise; yea, let each breath you breathe inspire a new song unto the Preserver of men. Make your life a Psalm, and be yourself an incarnate hymn—"all that is within me bless his holy name." The text is comprehensive.

II. Secondly, the suggestion of the text is MOST REASONABLE.

For, first, God has created all that is within us except the sin which mars us; every faculty, susceptibility, power or passion, is of the Lord's fashioning. It were not ours to feel, to think, to hope, to judge, to fear, to trust, to know, or to imagine, if he had not granted us the power. Who should own the house but the builder? Who should have the harvest but the husbandman? Who should receive the obedience of the child but the father? To whom, then, O my soul, shouldst thou render the homage of thy nature but to him who made thee all that thou art? Moreover, the Lord has redeemed our entire manhood. When we had gone astray, and all our faculties, like lost sheep, had taken each one its own several road of sin, Christ came into

the world and redeemed our entire nature, spirit, soul and body,—not a part of the man, but our complete humanity. Jesus Christ did not die for our souls only, but for our bodies too; and though at this present "the body is dead because of sin," and therefore we suffer pain and disease, yet the spirit is already life because of righteousness, and in its life we have a sure guarantee of the quickening of our mortal bodies in the day of the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body. We shall, at the coming of the Lord, be wholly restored in body and soul by the Lord's divine power, therefore let body and soul praise him who has redeemed both by his most precious blood. My body, thou art not mine to pamper thee, thou art my Lord's to serve him, for his blood has paid thy ransom-price and secured thy resurrection. My soul, my spirit, whatever faculty thou hast, Christ's blood is on all, therefore thou art not thine own. It would be sad, indeed, even to think of having an unredeemed will or an unredeemed judgment; but it is not so, every faculty is emancipated by a ransom. If the blood on the lintel has saved the house, then it has saved every room, and every chamber of ours should be consecrated to the Redeemer's praise.

Brethren, the Lord has given innumerable blessings to every part of our nature; we spoke of them just now, one by one, and it would be very easy to show that all our faculties are the recipients of blessing; therefore should they all bless God in return. Every pipe of the organ should yield its quota of sound. As in an eagle every bone, muscle, and feather is made with a view to flight, so is every part of a regenerate man created for praise. As all the rivers run into the sea, so all our powers should flow towards the Lord's praise.

To prove that this is reasonable, let me ask one single question:—if we do not devote all that is within us to the glory of God, which part is it that we should leave unconsecrated? and being less unconsecrated to God what should we do with it? It would be impossible to give a proper answer to this question. An unconsecrated part in a believer's manhood would become a nest of hornets, or, what if I say a den of devils, out of which evils would come forth to prowl over our entire being. A faculty unsanctified would be a leprous spot, a valley of Gehennam, a Dead Sea, a lair of pestilence. To be sanctified, spirit, soul, and body, is essential to us, and we must have it, it is but our reasonable service; all that is within us must bless God's holy name; to withhold part of the price were robbery, to reserve part of our territory from our king, would be treason.

III. But I will not further insist that it is reasonable, for I have further to assert that it is NECESSARY. It is necessary that the whole nature bless God, for at its best, when all engaged in the service, it fails to compass the work, and falls short of Jehovah's praise. All the man, with all his might, always occupied in all ways in blessing God, would still be no more than a whisper in comparison with the thunder of praise which the Lord deserves. One of our poets used a singular expression, which the fact more than justifies. He says—

> "But ah! eternity's too short
> To utter all thy praise."

It is so; the whole company of God's creatures would be incapable of

reflecting the whole of the divine glory; and such mercy and grace does God show to us in the gift of his dear Son, that the church militant, and the church triumphant, together are not equal to well-deserved praise. Do not, therefore, let us insult the Lord with half when the whole is not enough. Let us not bring him the tithe, when, if we had ten times as much, we could not magnify him as we should. We must, moreover, give the Lord all, because divided powers in every case lead to failure. The men who have succeeded in anything have almost always been men of one thing. He who is jack-of-all-trades is master of none; he who can do a little of this and a little of that never does much of any one thing. The fact is, there is only water enough in the brooklet of our manhood to drive one wheel, and if we divide it into many trickling runnels we shall accomplish nothing. The right thing is to dam up all our forces, and allow them to spend them-selves in one direction, and so pour them all forth upon the constantly revolving wheel of praise to God. How can we afford life to evaporate in trifles, when one aim only is worthy of our immortal being?

We who have been baptised upon profession of our faith were taught in that solemn ordinance to bless the Lord with our entire being, for we were not sprinkled here or there; but we were, in the outward sign, buried with the Lord Jesus in baptism unto death, and we were immersed into the name of the Triune God. If our baptism meant anything it declared that we were henceforth dead to the world, and owned no life but that which came to us by the way of the resurrection of Jesus. Over our heads the liquid water flowed, for we resigned the brain, with all its powers of thought, to Jesus; over the heart, the veins, the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the significant element poured itself, symbol of that universal consecration which deluges all the inward nature of every sanctified believer. My baptised brethren, I charge you belie not your profession.

Remember, beloved, this one telling argument, that Jesus Christ will have of us all or nothing; and he will have us sincere, earnest, and intense, or he will not have us at all. I see the Master at the table, and his servants place before him various meats, that he may eat and be satisfied. He tastes the cold meats, and he eats of the bread hot from the oven, but as for tepid drinks and half-baked cakes he puts them away with disgust. He will look on you who are cold, and are mourning your coldness, and he will give you heat; and he will look on you who are hot and serve him with the best you have; but of the middle-man, the lukewarm, he saith, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." Jesus cannot bear lukewarm religion; he is sick of it. The religion of this present time is much of it rather nauseating to the Saviour than acceptable to him. If Baal be God, serve him; but if God be God, serve him truly. Let there be no mockery, but be true to the core. Be thorough; throw your soul into your religion. I charge you, young man, stand back awhile and count the cost; for if you wish to give to Christ a little and to Baal a little, ye shall be cast away and utterly rejected—the Lord of heaven will have nought to do with you. Bless the Lord, then, all that is within me, for only such sincere and undivided homage can be accepted of the Lord.

IV. We must now pass on, and ask your attention yet further to the next remark: whole-hearted praise is BENEFICIAL. It is beneficial *to ourselves.* To be whole-hearted in the praise of God is to elevate our faculties. There can be no doubt whatever that many a man's powers have been debased by the object which he has pursued. Poets who might have been great poets, have missed the highest seats upon Parnassus because they have selected trivial topics or themes gross and impure, and, therefore, the best features of their poesy have never been fully developed. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and thou wilt be a man to the fulness of thy capacity. This is the way to reach the loftiest peak of human attainment. Consecration is culture. To praise is to learn. To bless God is also of preventive usefulness to us; we cannot bless God and at the same time idolise ourselves. Praise preserves us from being envious of others, for by blessing God for all we have, we learn to bless God for what other people have. I reckon it to be a great part of praise, to be thankful to God for making better men than myself. If we are always blessing the Lord, this will save us from murmuring; the spirit of discontent will be ejected by the spirit of thankfulness. And this will also deliver us from indolence, for, if all our powers magnify the Most High, we shall scorn the soft couch of ease and seek the place of service, that we may bring more honour to our Master. Nothing beautifies a man like praising God. There is a bath in Germany which enamels the bathers, and, if it does not make them beautiful for ever, yet, at least, beautiful for a while;—but to plunge our whole nature in adoration is far more beautifying. I was told by one who watched the revivals in the north of Ireland years ago, that he never saw the human face look so lovely as when it was lit up with the joy of the Holy Ghost during those times of refreshing. You know how pleasing landscapes appear when the sun shines upon them. The scenery has not half its charms till the sun "of this great world, both eye and soul," enriches the view with his wealth of colour, and makes all things glow with glory. Praise is the sunlight of life. Some of you conceal beneath a cloud of indifference all the beauty of your characters. You are like the lovely mountains of Cumberland, when they are enshrouded in mist,—little or nothing attractive is visible in you. May grace like a heavenly wind drive off the fogs of our despondency and discontent, and shed the sunlight of true praise all over our soul, and the beauty of our new-created man will be discerned. May we have many lovely praiseful Christians in this church, and may they abound in other churches also.

While whole-hearted praise is beneficial to ourselves, it is also useful to others. I am persuaded many souls are converted by the cheerful conversation of Christians; and many already converted are greatly strengthened by the holy joy of their brethren. You cannot do good more effectually than by a happy consecrated life, spent in blessing God. Imagine not that pensiveness is the fairest flower of piety. There have been, in the French church especially, eminent Christians who appear to have realised a likeness to Christ, rather in the sorrow which marred his visage, than in the joy which sustained his spirit. Jesus sorrowed that we might rejoice; we are no more to imitate him in his griefs than in his five wounds. It is truly Christian-like to rejoice in the Lord at all times. We should seek to have Christ's joy fulfilled in ourselves.

If there be anything that is cheerful, joyous, dewy, bright, full of heaven, it is the life of a man who blesses God all his days. This is the way to win souls. We shall not catch these flies with vinegar,—we must use honey. We shall not bring men into the church by putting into the window of Christ's shops, coffins, and crape, and shrouds, and standing at the door like mutes. No, we must tell the truth, and show sinners the best robe, the wedding ring, and the silver sandals of joy and gladness. We must sing—

> "The men of grace have found,
> Glory began below;
> Celestial truths on earthly ground
> From faith and hope do grow."

I read in Thomas Cooper's "Plain Talk," a story of a class leader who was in a sad state of mind, and therefore gave out in the class the hymn—

> "Ah, whither should I go,
> Burthen'd, and sick, and faint."

No one seemed to inclined to sing, and, therefore, the leader asked a certain brother Martin to start a tune. "No, no," said Martin, "I'm neither burden'd, nor sick, nor faint, I'll start no tune, not I!" Well, then, Brother Martin," said the leader, "give out a verse yourself." Whereupon Martin, with all the power of his lungs, sang—

> "Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
> My great Redeemer's praise."

Ah, that's the hymn, my brother, keep to that. If you have not a thousand tongues, at least let the one you have continue to bless the Lord while you have any being.

V. Lastly, all this is PREPARATORY. If we can attain to constant praise now, it will prepare us for all that awaits us. We do not know what will happen to us between this and heaven, but we can easily prognosticate the aim and result of all that will occur. We are harps which will be tuned in all their strings for the concerts of the blessed. The tuner is putting us in order. He sweeps his hands along the strings; there is a jar from every note; so he begins first with one string, and then goes to another. He continues at each string till he hears the exact note. The last time you were ill, one of your strings was tuned; the last time you had a bad debt, or trembled at declining business, another string was tuned. And so, between now and heaven, you will have every string set in order; and you will not enter heaven till all are in tune. Did you ever go to a place where they make pianos, and expect to hear sweet music? The tuning-room is enough to drive a man mad, and in the factory you hear the screeching of saws and the noise of hammers, and you say, "I thought this was a place where they made pianos." Yes, so it is, but it is not the place where they play them. On earth is the place where God makes musical instruments, and tunes them, and between now and heaven he will put all that is within them into fit condition for blessing and praising his name

eternally. In heaven, every part of the man will bless God without any difficulty. No need for a preacher there to exhort you; no need for you to talk to yourself, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul;" you will do it as naturally as now you breathe. You never take any consideration as to how often you shall breathe, and you have no plan laid down as to when your blood shall circulate, because these matters come naturally to you; and in heaven it will be your nature to praise God; you will breathe praise, you will live in an atmosphere of adoration, and like those angels who for many an age, day without night, have circled the throne of Jehovah rejoicing, so will you. But I will not speak much on that, or you will be wanting to be flying away to our own dear country—

> "Where we shall see his face,
> And never, never sin;
> But from the rivers of his grace
> Drink endless pleasures in."

You must stay a little while longer in the tents of Kedar, and mingle with the men of soul-distressing Mesech; but till the day break and the shadows flee away, say unto your soul, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

I wish all my hearers could do this, but some of you cannot bless God at all, and it would be idle for me to tell you to do it. You are dead in your sin. I read a story the other day of a woman convinced of her state by a singular dream. She dreamed she saw her minister standing in the midst of a number of flower pots which he was watering, and she thought that she was one of the flower-pots, but the minister passed her by, and said, "It is no use watering that plant, for it is dead." This morning I must pass by the dead plants. Oh, sinner, can you bear this? I do not invite you to sing the believer's song of praise, can you bear to be left out? Though I pass you by, I pray the Lord to look upon you, and say to you—Live! And ere I close, I must tell you something else, which is meant for dead sinners as well as living saints. It is this: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." God grant to you that saving faith for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm ciii.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SECRET FOOD AND THE PUBLIC NAME.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of Hosts."—Jeremiah xv. 16.

JEREMIAH had been greatly persecuted for his faithfulness in delivering the word of God. He tells us the reason for his continuance in a work which brought him so sorrowful a reward. He gives us to understand that he had been faithful in delivering God's word, because that word had been overpoweringly precious to his own soul. He could not do otherwise than speak the truth, because that truth had been his own daily food. He had met with nothing but ill-treatment from those whom he addressed; they had vilified him in every way; he had been put into the most noisome dungeon; he had been denied even bread and water; everything short of actually putting him to death had been inflicted upon him by his ungrateful countrymen; but still he went on prophesying. He could not be silent. Though his prophesying brought him nothing but tears, yet he continued still to prophesy; for God's word came with such sweetness to his own soul, and filled his heart with such ravishing joy and delight, that he could not do otherwise than go and tell out among his fellow men what had been so delightful to himself. I believe this to be the secret of every living ministry. The ministry that is fed upon flattery, and flatters those who flatter it, is a poor feeble counterfeit, and God will never bless it; but the ministry which under great difficulties and fierce opposition is still sustained because the preacher cannot help continuing in it, is that which God will bless. It was good advice of a venerable divine to a young man who aspired to be a preacher, when he said to him, "Don't become a minister if you can help it." The man who could very easily be a tradesman or a merchant had better not be a minister. A preacher of the gospel should always be a volunteer, and yet he should always be a pressed man, who serves his King because he is omnipotently constrained to do so. Only he is fit to preach who

cannot avoid preaching, who feels that woe is upon him unless he preach the gospel, and that the very stones would cry out against him if he should hold his peace. I have said that Jeremiah lets us into a secret. His outer life, consisting in his perpetual faithful ministry, was to be accounted for by his inward love of the word which he preached. Depend upon it, this secret unriddles all true spiritual life. If ever you see any one who walks in holiness stand fast in temptation, and is upheld under affliction, you may rest assured there is a something about him that is not perceived by every eye; there is a secret which the world knoweth not of,—a hidden fountain, which sustains the stream of his life,—an invisible spring of vitality which keeps him vigorous even in the midst of surrounding death Bunyan's metaphor was, that he saw a fire which was burning under singular circumstances, for one stood before it who continually threw water upon it to quench it, but though he did so, yet the fire was not put out. Christian could not understand the marvel till the Interpreter took him behind the wall, and there he saw one that cast oil upon the fire as perseveringly as the enemy cast the water, so that the fire being secretly nourished could not be extinguished. Every Christian's life is of that sort: there is abundance to destroy it, but, if it be sustained, there is a secret something which keeps that soul alive unto God and persevering to the end.

We shall, then, to-night speak about the *secret life of the believer*, and afterwards upon his *public life*. His secret life is described in this way: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." That was for himself alone. In the next sentence you have his public life, his manifestation before men—"For I am called by thy name O Jehovah, God of hosts."

I. Now observe that in the description of Jeremiah's SECRET LIFE, which consists of his inward *reception of* the word of God (which description will answer for ourselves) we have three points,—*the finding of God's word, the eating of it*, and *the rejoicing in it with all his heart.*

First, you have *the finding of it*—"Thy words were found." Now we have not to find God's word as Jeremiah had, by waiting until the Spirit of God reveals fresh truth, for the Spirit of God now reveals no fresh truth to us. He takes of the things of Christ—the things which are revealed in the Scriptures—and opens them and applies them to us. We are not to expect any addition to the sacred canon: the book is finished, and there shall be nothing added thereto. We have not to find God's word therefore in that respect. If any man comes to me and says, "I have God's word for you"—if he speaks not according to this book you may know at once that he is a liar, and that his utterance is a vain imagination. Yea, though he should come with pretended miracles and should boast proudly of his visions, yet is he to be rejected, for Holy Scripture is the mind of God and novelties are the fancies of men. And, therefore, when we use the term "*finding*" God's word, we must use it rightly, and our meaning will be mainly contained in the following senses:—

First, *we read the word.* Here it is: God's word is all here, and, if we would find it, we must read it earnestly. Let me commend to you

the frequent reading of the word of God. Young people would do well to form the habit of reading a chapter every day, not as a form, but with a sincere desire to understand what they read. If they continue to do so till life's latest hour they will not regret it. The want of habitual reading of Holy Scripture by professedly Christian people is very much to be regretted. If you trust yourself to read the word only when it is convenient to you, it will very often happen that day after day will pass over without a passage of Scripture having been read at all, but if you make it a point that such a time shall be set apart for the reading of a chapter and keep to it, it will be well for you. Of course the habit of setting apart any time is not binding. None of us may say to his brother, "You ought at such an hour to read the Scriptures;" for we are not under legal bondage, neither are we to judge our brethren; but, though not binding, I believe it to be very profitable, and as proper a thing as appointing regular times for meals. As the habit of having a time for prayer is good, so also is the habit of reading the Scriptures. Yet it is a mischievous practice to read a great deal of the Bible without time for thought, it flatters our conceit without benefitting our understanding. The practice of always reading the Bible in scraps is also to be deprecated. I recommend the student of Scripture to read through a whole book carefully. As with a poem we could not get the spirit and sense of the poet by reading a stanza here and there, so you cannot expect to discover the drift of Bible teaching by taking a verse or two here and there. The Bible is divided into many books, and I would recommend you all to read through a book, carefully and prayerfully, and get the general run and catch the drift of the author, and so endeavour to perceive the mind of God. But at the same time, do recollect that, like every other valuable book, the Bible needs diligent and prayerful reading. Surface-skimming is of little use. Some go through the Bible just as a traveller may be whirled through a country in a railway carriage: he will know very little indeed about that country though he may traverse it from end to end. He only sees a little of it out of the window, and the conclusions he may come to will be very poor ones and utterly unreliable; and to go whirling through a chapter of Scripture, as it were, at railway speed, is of little or no service to the mind. I recollect an Arminian brother telling me once that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times, and could never find the doctrine of Election in them. He added he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read them on his knees. I said to him, "I think you read them in a very uncomfortable posture, and if you had read them in your easy chair you would have been more likely to understand them. Pray by all means, and the more the better; but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the posture in which a man puts himself in reading: and as to reading through the Bible twenty times without having found anything about the doctrine of Election, I said, "the wonder is that you found anything at all: you must have galloped through them at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of what the meaning of the Scriptures was at all." If but once in that man's life he had taken the Scriptures and really desired to know their meaning, and had weighed them deliberately and studied them verse by verse and word by word, I

think he would have been far more likely to find what was the true meaning of the words which the Holy Spirit has used.

But, to come back to our subject,—we want more Bible reading. I shall not to-night speak of those who waste their time in reading works of fiction though there are innumerable hordes of time-destroying volumes that come pouring forth from the press—but I fear that even our religious literature, the best of it, has in some measure kept men from the word of God itself. I should like to see all the good books themselves burnt, as well as the bad books of Ephesus, if they keep men from reading Holy Scripture for themselves. Here is the well of purest Gospel undefiled: it springs up in this precious volume with freshness and sweetness unequalled. We who write upon it, hand out that same sweet water to you in our own cups and goblets, but to some extent all our vessels are defiled. There is in the purest intellect some measure of error; and the living water which we hand out to the people must in some measure participate in our imperfection. Do not be content to drink from our pipkins and our chalices, but come and put your lips right down to where the living water, with all the self-sufficient fulness of the deeps eternal, comes welling up from the very heart of God. This is the way to find the word—to read it for yourselves, to read it from the Book. If you can read it from the original books so much the better, but if you cannot, be thankful that you have so good a translation as that which is to be found in every Englishman's house. Be sure you read it until you can say, "Thy words were found."

But we have not found God's word when we have read it, unless *we add to it an understanding of the word.* The mere words of Scripture are no better than any other words, only so far as they contain a higher and nobler sense. It is man's superstitiousness to think a text is any more because it is in the Bible than anywhere else—I mean the words of the text—the mere sound. Yet I have known a great many who, when they have just repeated a text of Scripture or read a text of Scripture, think that something good is done. Why, dear friend, you want to get the meaning—the inner sense. Nuts must be cracked, so must Scripture—you must get out the meaning, or you have got nothing. Marrow bones, who can feed on them? Split them, take out the marrow, and then you have luscious food. Merely verbal utterances, even though they be the utterance of the Holy Spirit, cannot feed the soul. It is the inward meaning, the truth that is revealed, which we should labour after. To often they stick in the letter, and advance not to the soul of divine truth. Pray, dear friends, as you read the Scriptures, that God may illuminate you; ask that you may not read in the dark as many do, who therefore stumble at the words in disobedience. The best interpreter of a book is generally the man who wrote it. The Holy Ghost wrote the Scriptures. Go to him to get their meaning, and you will not be misled. Oh, when shall the time come when every Christian shall say, "By the grace of God I read the Scripture, and I am enabled by the Holy Spirit to mark it, to learn it, and to understand it. I earnestly labour to know what God means by what he has said, as far as the human intellect can understand his meaning."

To find God's word, however, means more than this. I think it means sometimes the *discovery of select and appropriate words to suit our case.* "Thy words were found." You know when you have lost your key, and your cupboard or your drawer cannot be opened, you send for a locksmith, and he comes in with a whole bunch of keys. First he tries one—that does not fit; then he tries another—that will not do; and the good man perseveres, perhaps with twenty keys, it may be with fifty. At last he gets the proper key, which springs the lock, and he opens your treasure for you. Now Scripture to us is much of the same nature. We have many promises in the time of trouble, and it is a great blessing to find the promise that suits our case. We turn them all over and say, "Well that is a precious promise, but then I am not exactly in that condition. That is a choice word, but then I do not think I can lay claim to it. And then again, this third passage is very cheering, but then it is evidently not spoken to a person in my position." At last you find one, and you say, "Ah, this is *the* word spoken to a person of my character—in my condition of soul. My God, now apply this to my heart with power, and make this truth be to my soul comforting and cheering. Thy words are found. I have found the divine utterance which emphatically pertains to me." And truly, dear brethren, if we desire to find a word of God that would suit us we need never be long in searching, if we seek sacred direction. We have come to a point, perhaps, in life, where two roads meet, and neither of them seems to diverge from the straight path, and yet we feel solemnly that in a moment we may change the whole current of our life from peace to sorrow by making a mistake. Kneel down at the cross roads and cry, "Lord lead me," and then go to the Book and ask that the proper guidance for this condition may be indicated by the written word; and you shall often find a text leap out of Scripture to you, seizing your soul with loving violence, and drawing you into the appointed path. I do not mean by this the idle and wicked practice of opening upon texts as a sort of lottery, but a far higher and more spiritual matter by far. The Holy Spirit still remains to us, and is the Urim and Thummim of the Christian Church, even as Providence is the pillar of cloud and fire. "'Thy words were found'—I went to thee and to thy Book for them that I might be guided and comforted by them, and I was guided to, and guided by, the text appropriate to the occasion."

At the same time, in opposition, or apposition, to this remark, let me say it looks to me as if Jeremiah made no selection at all in another sense: "Thy words were found." They were thy words, everyone of them, and I did eat them. No matter what the words were—were they bitter words, I did eat them,—they were my medicine; were they sweet words, I did eat them,—they were my consolation; were they words of instruction, I did eat them,—they were my daily bread. I did not find fault with doctrinal truth, for I found it among thy words. On the other hand, were they words of precept, I did not say, "I do not want to be legal; I hate the very word *duty*. No, but when I found thy words, if they were precept words I did eat them. There were some of thy words that looked black in the face upon me, they threatened me, they rebuked me, they humbled me, they spoiled my beauty, they laid me in the dust; but these very words I loved, because I felt that faithful

were the wounds of a friend.' I laid bare my breast to these lancets. I asked the good physician to use these sharp texts upon me." Now this ought to be our constant spirit—searching for the text appropriate to the occasion, and yet willing that any Scripture and every Scripture should have its due effect upon our souls. Beware of picking and choosing in God's word. It is a very dangerous symptom when there is any portion of Scripture that we are afraid to read. If there is one single chapter in the Book that I do not like, it must be because I feel it accuses and condemns me, and my duty ought to be to face that chapter at once and answer its accusation, and endeavour as far as possible to purify myself by God's help from that which the passage of Scripture condemns. Brethren, read that passage most which stings you most. When I go to visit the aged or the sick, I generally know whereabouts the Bible will be marked with dog's ears, and thumbed and rubbed. Of course one of the favourites is the chapter, "Let not your heart be troubled," and another—the eighth of Romans—"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God;" and then, again, they are sure to read again and again the precious Book of Psalms. We are sure to find that the Saints have been there. And I cannot blame them; I think so many of the ripest saints would not have fallen into the habit if it had been a wrong one; but, at the same time, I pray you all, do not be afraid to read, or hesitate to read, or be slow to read portions which are not comfortable—passages which are full of rebuke, for we all want rebuke, and need it continually, and as soon as we find the word of God, whether we like it or not for the time, it is ours to receive it and feed upon it by God's gracious help.

"Thy words were found;" that is, *I felt I had got a hold of them;* I knew I had got them; I had discovered them—they were thy words to my inmost soul. Do you know there is a habit springing up in these times, when a passage of Scripture is quoted, to put the name of the author at the bottom, as, for instance, Isaiah, Paul, Christ. Now I think the habit is a very absurd one, for the moment you read a verse of Scripture you do not want to know who wrote it—you feel quite sure it is a Scriptural text. When a man quotes a text of Scripture and puts the name of Christ at the bottom, you feel it to be a superfluity. You know Christ's words: there is a particular ring about them, there is a something golden in them that cannot be imitated by the utterances of other men. So it is with the whole of the word of God—we perceive by instinct that the words are the Lord's own. Perhaps we could not tell to others why we know; but there is a peculiar majesty, a remarkable fulness, a singular potency, a divine sweetness, in any word of God, which is not discoverable, nor anything like it, in the word of man, except that word of man be itself drawn directly from the word of God. Now we hear of some who try to take away from us God's word. "This book is not inspired," they say, "and that book is not authentic,—this chapter there is a dispute about;" and, as for the whole of it, the gentry of these days tell us that there may be a *sort* of inspiration in it, and so on. Well, sirs, the Bible shall be to you what you like; you shall treat it as you please, and you shall look upon it as a mere commonplace book if you will; but this know, that to us it is God's inspired teaching, infallible, and infinitely pure. We accept it as the very word

of the living God, every jot and tittle of it, not so much because there are external evidences which go to show its authenticity,—a great many of us do not know anything about those evidences, and probably never shall,—but because we discern an inward evidence in the words themselves. They have come to us with a power that no other words ever had in them, and we cannot be argued out of our conviction of their superlative excellence and divine authority. We have found the words of our heavenly Father: we know we have, for children know their own father's voice. When we speak God's truth, we speak what we do know, what we have tasted, and handled, and tested, and proved.

Dear brethren, I have been rather lengthy upon this first and most important matter of finding God's word, and I will tell you why. I have dwelt thus fully upon it because it is just this which is the secret of the thorough Christian life in all its departments. Jeremiah would not have been so bold a preacher if he had not thus found God's word. If you hold God's word with a loose hand, if you are an inattentive reader, if you are a superficial believer, if you have loose views about the authority of divine revelation, you will be lax in everything else, you will be loose in your obedience to the precept, in your love to the doctrine, and in your hope in the promise. It stands to reason if the word of God be not God's word to you, it will not comfort you to the same extent as it did Jeremiah, neither will you obey it with the same reverence or teach it with like perseverance. If you do not attach reverence and divinity and inspiration to the word of God it will not yield to you the force and power which it ought to yield, and your whole life will suffer therefrom.

Thus much upon the finding of God's word. *A second view of the inner life* must now be considered. "Thy word was found, and I did eat it." The surest way to preserve the truth of God, is to put it into the casket of the soul, to enclose it in one's inner man. "I did eat it." By that term is signified, first, the prizing of God's word. When Jeremiah received a sentence which he knew came from God's mouth *he prized it*, he loved it so that he ate it; he could not lay it aside; he did not merely think of it; he loved it so that he put it into his very self. Oh, when we get God's truth do not let us love it so little as to shelve it by saying, "I accept it formally as belonging to the Articles of the Church of which I am a member," but let us prize it so that we may say, "I must carry it about me, nay, better than that, I must carry it *in* me, it is meat and drink to me." "I did eat it."

The term eating implies, moreover, that *he derived nourishment from it.* The food we eat, if it be fit for eating, nourishes and supports us. So when a man reads God's word as he ought to do, he feeds upon it, and finds in it a something that makes him a better man, a stronger man, more bold in holy service, and more patient in submission to God's will. It is delightful to sit down and suck the soul out of a text, to take it and feel that not the letter only but the inner vitals of the text are our own, and are to be received into the very nature of our spirit to become assimilated with it. Many foolish persons, when they come to the Lord's table, imagine that in eating the bread and drinking the wine there is some eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of Christ in a corporeal manner; but those who understand the mysteries

know that eating the flesh of Christ signifies considering, meditating, and feeding upon the truth that Christ was incarnate, was of our nature, and is still partaker of the nature of man. The humanity of Christ becomes food for our souls, and that is the meaning of eating his flesh. So, when we drink the wine, the atonement, the sufferings of Christ are thought upon, weighed, and considered; and these become food for our faith, our gratitude, our love, our confidence, and holiness. So, too, with every truth—we are to feed upon it, we are not merely to accept the statement as being true, but we are to get out of it that nourishment for our inner man which God intended it should render. "Thy word was found, and I did eat it." It is a very different thing from saying, "Thy word was found, and I did admire it," or "Thy word was found, and I did criticise it," or "Thy word was found, and I did divide it and make a sermon of it." That is a minister's temptation. But "Thy word was found, and I did eat it." I said to my soul, "Here is something to make thee better, to make thee more Christlike, something to help thee in thy struggle against sin." Brethren, let us use the word for that purpose. By the help of God's blessed Spirit let us eat it as our every-day food, the bread and the salt, the wine and the water of our life.

But the figure of eating means more, *it sets forth an intimate union.* That which a man eats gets intertwined with his own self, his own personality. The body is built up from the elements which are received in the form of food. So the man, the real man, the soul, is made up of the truth which he lives upon. Some feed on error, and their whole manhood, their hope, their confidence, everything is built up of error, and their religion is deceitful throughout; but he that feeds upon God's word gets God's word to be a part of himself, and his faith and hope are all based upon truth. I sometimes hear of a person giving up a certain doctrine. Well, I am certain if a man gives up any doctrine of God's word he never knew it, for he who knows God's truth knows that it has a clinging power, and will not be separated from us. The diligent believer when he knows the word, learns it so well that he assimilates it into his own being. Let me illustrate this by a fact which is notable in a lower sense in certain natural persuasions. When Galileo was convinced that the world moved, they put him in prison for it, and in his weakness he recanted, and said he believed it stood still and that the sun moved, but the moment he got away from his persecutors he stamped his foot, and said, "But it does move, though." And so he who knows the truth as it is in Jesus has even a higher persuasion than that which ruled Galileo. He cannot belie the truth: he has got it so into himself that he cannot give it up. Sirs, if you can run from Christ you have not yet become his disciple. If you can leave him, you never knew him. If you can deny the truth, and utterly give it up, you have never known it savingly; but he that can say, "Thy word was found, and I did eat it," may confront the foe, and when his enemy cries, "Give it up!" his reply will be, "How can I give it up? I have eaten it." You remember the faithful servant who was sent by his master with a very valuable diamond, and who, when he was attacked on the road, swallowed the diamond. Well, but even then it might have been taken from him had the robbers killed him;

but if the diamond had been of such a nature that the man in eating it could digest it and assimilate it into himself, all the thieves that ever attacked him could not take away from him that which he had eaten. And so, when a soul feeds upon the precious truth of God, all the devils in hell multiplied fifty thousand times could not take the truth away from him. It is most important for this very reason that we should get such grip of truth that it should be, as it were, burnt into our souls, interwoven into the warp and woof of our very being, to run like a silver thread right through our entire existence, so that you could rend that existence to pieces and destroy it before you could destroy the truth that is inwrought in it. "Thy word was found, and I did eat it."

See here, then, my beloved, the secret power that will support a Christian's life—the eating of God's word—the getting it thoroughly into one's soul. This is it which will make you speak and act as a Christian. There is a great deal of error in many Christians, and a great deal of sin, and many try to correct the error and remove the sin, and they do well; but have you never heard a doctor say, when a person has been covered with some eruption, "I shall not deal with these eruptions at all; I shall apply no ointment. They are caused by the poorness of the patient's blood. I shall recommend to him a generous diet; I shall give him a strengthening medicine which will invigorate the system, and these blotches will disappear as a natural consequence." Depend upon it very many of the faults which are to be condemned in Christians are the result of their not leaning upon God's word, their not knowing the whole of it, especially the strong meat parts of it, as they ought to do; and if they did come to find God's word, and to eat it, their spiritual constitution would be stronger, and then they would throw off many of the ailments that are now such an injury to them, and they would become healthy, vigorous, mighty in the service of God.

Notice, then, *the third glimpse into the inner life.* "Thy word was found, and I did eat it, and it was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Nothing makes a man so happy as the word of God. Nothing makes him so full of delight and peace of soul as feeding upon the word. "The joy and rejoicing of mine heart." I preached the gospel on a certain occasion in a certain place of worship, and I preached the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, and it was not believed in by the minister. However, many of his people who heard the doctrine, and never would have believed it if I had mentioned the words "Final perseverance," drank it in, and it made them so very happy that the minister declared I had done a world of mischief by it, for he believed the good souls would never give up the doctrine! Truly, when God's word comes with the power that makes you joy and rejoice in it, your inward delight becomes to your heart a main reason for holding it tenaciously. I would cheerfully give up many doctrines if I believed that they were only party watchwords, and were merely employed for the maintenance of a sect; but those doctrines of grace, those precious doctrines of grace, against which so many contend, I could not renounce or bate a jot of them, because they are the joy and rejoicing of my heart. When one is full of health and vigour, and has everything going well, you might, perhaps, live on the elementary

truths of Christianity very comfortably; but in times of stern pressure of spirit, when the soul is much cast down, you want the marrow and the fatness. In times of inward conflict, salvation must be all of grace from first to last; then it must be not according to the will of the flesh, but according to the will of God; then you want an everlasting "covenant ordered in all things and sure;" then "the sure mercies of David are precious," and then it is that you come to understand how those glorious truths which have been called Calvinistic, but which are really the truth of God's own word, are so much prized by old and advanced believers. Aged and tried saints, having had their senses exercised to discern good and evil, have also come to a period of life in which they need consolation, to a time in which deep experience calls for solid sustenance, and therefore they fall back on the eternal verities and rejoice in them. Beloved, may you know every truth of God's word by rejoicing in it: may you know its power to console you and uplift you in the time of distress, for, when you know the joy that flows from the truth into the regenerate heart, you will say—

> "Should all the forms which men devise
> Assault my faith with treacherous art,
> I'll call them vanities and lies,
> And bind the gospel to my heart."

These three things are the secret of a strong spiritual life—to find, to eat, and to rejoice, in God's word.

II. Now, very briefly, we shall describe THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS OUTWARD LIFE, as he is mentioned here:—"I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." Now I think these words may be used in three ways.

First, the condition of Jeremiah was one which *he had attained by his conduct.* He was so continually preaching about Jehovah, so constantly insisting upon Jehovah's will, and going upon Jehovah's errands, that they came to call him "Jehovah's man," and he was known by Jehovah's name. Now the man who loves God's word, and feeds on it, and rejoices in it, will so act that he will come to be called a Christian. He will not only be so, but he will be called so. Men will take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. If they do not give him the name in the sense of honouring him, they will give it him as a nickname, but they will be sure to call him in their hearts at least by such a title. An esteemed city missionary, who for years frequented public houses to preach the gospel there, was known as "the man with the book," because he always carried his Bible with him. Oh, I wish many of us were known as "the man with the book." Among the heathen it has frequently happened that earnest missionaries have been known as "Jesus Christ's men," or the heathen have said "Here comes God's man." We don't expect them to give us that title by word of mouth, but I would earnestly pray that every one of us may have it in some shape or other. You know generally the world will pick out some religious leader, and then they will abuse those who listen to him by calling them by his name. They need not blush at that, since it is often only the world's way of owning that they are Christians—their acknowledging that they are the followers of that which is right and true.

Years ago, when a man spoke of the things of God with great emotion, so that he quaked with holy trembling, they called him a "Quaker." It was but acknowledging that a power was influencing the man which the world did not understand. And when other persons were methodical and precise in their lives, they called them "Methodists"—persons who lived by method and rule. They needed not to be ashamed of that, and they were not. It was only another way of the world's pointing them out, and saying "These are God's people." They thought it a sneer and meant it for a sneer, but it was an honour. To be called "Jehovah's man" was an honour to Jeremiah; and to be called by any of these nicknames, which signify that we belong to God, is an honour to aspire after and not to be regretted. May we all win some opprobrious name, and wear it as our title of holy chivalry.

But this is a name, in the second place, which is *involved in the profession of every Christian.* "I am called by thy name, O Jehovah, God of hosts." Of course you are so called, if your profession be true. You were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and you there and then accepted that name. You are a believer in Christ, and therefore you are rightly called a Christian. You cannot escape from it. By being a believer in Christ's name, you have Christ's name named upon you. Oh, friend, consider what your obligations are! There was a soldier in the Macedonian army who was named Alexander,—a coward; and he was called before the king, and asked, "What is your name?" He said, "Alexander." Then, said the king, "You must give up your name, or you must cease to be a coward." So we call before us those who are Christians, and we say, "What is your name? You are named with the name of Christ; therefore you must give up being covetous; you must give up being bad tempered, worldly, slothful, lustful, or else you must give up Christ's name, for we cannot have Christ's name dishonoured any more than Alexander would have his name dishonoured." You were spitting fire just now against that person who had irritated you. Suppose I had stepped in at that moment, and said, "You are called by the name of Christ!" what a colour would have risen in your face! Perhaps to-day you were talking the idlest stuff with vain persons, and supposing some one whom you honoured and loved had laid his hand on you and whispered, "What, you a Christian, and talk like that?" How would you have felt? Oh, that we remembered always that we are Christians, and therefore must always act up to the name that is named upon us. God grant you friends, that, in the power of the eating of God's word, you may be constrained to act ever as becometh those upon whom the name of Christ is named.

Once more, this word may be used in *the sense which arises out of the gospel itself.* "I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts: I belong to thee. When they gather up the nations, and they say, 'This man belongs to Babylon, and that man to Assyria, and that man to Egypt,' I belong to thee, and am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." What a comfort this is—we who believe in Christ belong to God. We are his portion, and he will never lose us. "They shall be mine," saith the Lord, "when I make up my jewels." We see the broad arrow put here and there upon royal property—upon government

property,—let us recollect that we have the broad arrow of the King of Kings set upon us as believers in Christ. The Lord will take care of us because his name is named upon us, and we belong to him. "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price." "All things are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." You are poor: but you are Christ's. Does not that mitigate your poverty? You are sick: but you are God's. Does not that comfort you? The poor lamb lies in the cold field, but, if it belongs to a good shepherd, it shall not die. The sheep is sick, or it has wandered; but, if it belongs to an Omnipotent shepherd, it shall be healed and it shall be brought back. The name of Christ being named upon us is the guarantee of our present comfort and of our future security.

Oh, brethren, I come back to the point I began with:—Find God's word, eat God's Word, rejoice in God's word; and then go and live as those who are alive from the dead, who wear not the name of the first Adam now, but the name of the second Adam; who are not known any longer as the servants of sin, but known as the servants—the sons—of God, for ever and ever. God bless you, and, if you have not believed, may you be led to trust in Jesus crucified this very night, that you may be called by his name. We pray it for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Jeremiah XV.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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OUR GIFTS, AND HOW TO USE THEM.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."—2 Timothy i. 6.

I SUPPOSE that Timothy was a somewhat retiring youth and that from the gentleness of his nature he needed to be exhorted to the exercise of the bolder virtues. He is bidden not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, and to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He is called to the front though his modesty would have kept him in the rear, and he is exhorted to command and teach, suffering no man to despise his youth. Perhaps, also, he was not a man of very vigorous action, and needed every now and then a little touch of the spur to induce him to put forth all his dormant energy and keep himself and his church thoroughly up to the mark in labour for Christ. His was a choice spirit, and therefore it was desirable to see it strong, brave, and energetic. No one would wish to arouse a bad man, for like a viper he is all the worse for being awake; but in proportion to the excellence of the character is the desirability of its being full of force. The apostle Paul tells Timothy, in his first epistle, not to neglect the gift that is in him, and in the text before us he bids him stir up that gift: in each case he is sounding the trumpet in his ear, and summoning him to intense action.

He speaks of the gift that was conferred by the laying on of his hands, and in the former epistle he connects that with the hands of the presbytery. Now, it was no doubt the custom to lay on hands at the ordination of Christian ministers by the apostles, and there was an excellent reason for it, for gifts were thereby conveyed to the ordained, and when we can find anybody who can thereby confer some spiritual gift upon us, we shall be glad to have their hands laid on our heads; but empty hands we care not for. Rites cease when their meaning ceases. If practised any longer they gender to superstition, and are fit instruments of priestcraft. The upholding of the hands of the

eldership, when they give their vote to elect a man to the pastorate, is a sensible proceeding; and is, I suspect, all the apostle means when he speaks of the presbytery; but empty hands it seems to me are fitly laid on empty heads, and to submit to an empty ceremony is the idlest of all idle waste of time. If Paul were here, and could confer a gift, we should rejoice to receive it; yea, and if the meanest man in Christendom, or woman either, could confer the smallest drachma of grace by the putting on of their hands, we would bow our head in the lowliest manner; till then we shall beg to decline submitting to the imposition, or assisting in it. For this reason, and others, we cannot use the text exactly as it stands in addressing this congregation, but leaving out the reference to laying on of hands, we may honestly, without violation of the current of inspiration, proceed to exhort each one of you to stir up the gift that is in you.

There are many kinds of gifts. All Christians have some gift. Some may have but one talent, but all have one at the least. The Great Householder has apportioned to every servant a talent. No single part of a vital body is without its office. True, there are some parts of the body whose office has not been discovered; even the physician and the anatomist have not been able to tell why certain organs are in the human frame, or what office they serve, but as even these are found to be necessary, we are quite sure that they fulfil some useful purpose. Truly, there are some Christians who might be put in that category: it might puzzle anybody to know what they are capable of; and yet it is certain they have some charge committed to them to keep, and that, if true believers, they are essential parts of the body of Christ. As every beast, bird, fish, and insect, has its own place in nature, so has every Christian a fit position in the economy of grace. No tree, no plant, no weed, could be dispensed with without injury to nature's perfectness; neither can any sort of gift or grace be lost to the church without injury to her completeness. Every living saint has his charge to keep—his talent, over which he is a steward. A measure of gift is in all of us, needing to be stirred up.

Some have gifts without them rather than within them—gifts, for instance, of worldly position, estate and substance. These ought to be well used, and considering that in these times we have a starving world to deal with, and that one of the great impediments to the spread of the gospel is with some of us the lack of means for the maintenance of those who should preach the word, it does seem a strange thing that professors should lay by God's money and use it as if it were their own. When for our orphans, our students, our colporteurs, and our missionaries, we need funds, how can men love the Lord with all their hearts, and yet keep their thousands cankering at their bankers, or their tens resting in their purses? They have not learned to provide for themselves bags that wax not old. They do not understand that to keep their money they must give it away, that truly to preserve it they must dedicate it to God. For that which is kept by the miserly for themselves is not really preserved, but wasted. That which is expended in the Master's service is laid up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt. But I am not going to speak about that: I have not much reason to speak upon that subject to those who are immediately

connected with me, for I have rather to praise you than to upbraid. Most of our dear friends here do serve the Lord with the gifts that are outside of them—not all as we should, but many with more than ordinary liberality, and some up to the full measure of their means, if not beyond them. There are, however, exceptions to all rules; and there are a few who attend this place who need more than a gentle hint to excite anything like generosity in them. But we must go at once to the point in hand;—"the gift that is *in* you," we have now to speak of.

First, *the gift that may be in each one of us;* and then, secondly, *how we are to stir this gift up;* and in conclusion, we will give *reasons for the stirring of it.*

I. First, then, WHAT GIFT IS THERE IN US? In some here present there are gifts of mind, which are accompanied with gifts of utterance. It is no mean thing to be able to read the Scriptures and to see their inner meaning, to be able to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and to be so taught in other matters, that we are able to see the hand of God in history, and can upon all such subjects speak to edification. It is not every one who has mind who has also the gift of utterance, but where God is pleased to give to any man mind and mouth, he possesses a gift which he ought abundantly to use. Many a man is mighty in the Scriptures, but not eloquent; when the two things meet, as in Apollos, and are combined with a fervent spirit, a man of God has power indeed. May I suggest that every Christian man here who is possessed of the faculty of eloquent discourse is bound to use it for Jesus Christ. Some young men spend their evenings in Debating Societies and the like, and I have not a word to say against that, but I have this to say—whatever you may do with this talent in other directions, the Lord, who has bought you with his blood if you are a Christian man, has the first claim upon you, and you are bound to use your powers of utterance in his cause. "But I am not a minister!" What do you mean by that? Do you find anything in Scripture about clergy and laity? If so, you have read it with different eyes from mine. There were men called especially to the oversight of the Church and the preaching of the word, but everyone according to his gift had also a call, and there is no man in the Church of God who has ability to speak who has any license to be silent. Not only the golden-mouthed orators, but the silver-tongued speakers—men of the second as well as of the first order—should serve in the gospel of the Son of God. I shall not ask any young man whether he ought to preach, but whether he can prove that he ought not. Every man is bound to tell another who is in danger to escape from that danger. Everyone who has recovered from a dreadful disease is bound to tell others what remedy was made effectual in his case. Nothing can excuse us from, in some way or other, spreading abroad the gospel of Jesus Christ; and, if we have the ability to speak, it will go hard at last with us if we have been silent with our fellow men. The stones in the street might surely cry out against some religious professors who make the Houses of Parliament, the Council-chamber, the Courts of Justice, the Athenæum, or the Mechanics' Hall, ring with their voices, and yet preach not Jesus—who can argue points of politics and the like, but not speak a word for Christ,—eloquent for the world, but dumb for Jesus. From

this may God deliver us! If thou hast any gift, young man, come out and use it—or old man either, if thou hast laid it by till late in the day. In these straitened times when the harvest is ripe and the labourers are few, let every man that has his sickle come forth into the field. Let no man say, "I pray thee have me excused," but by the blood that bought you, if ye have tasted of the water of life cry aloud and spare not, and be this your message—"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

There are numbers of believers who have not the gift of utterance with the tongue, who nevertheless can speak very fluently and admirably with the pen. If, then, you have the gift of the pen, are you using it for Christ as you ought? I want to stir up the gift that is in you. Letters have often been blessed to conversions; are you accustomed to write with that view? Perhaps you are a great contributor to the postal revenue; let me ask you what sort of matter it is with which you burden her Majesty's mails? Do you write letters to your children and friends full of loving testimony to what the grace of God has done for you? If you have not done so, dear friends, try at once. Jesus needs consecrated pens, and in his name I claim your service. The writing of tracts, and the dissemination of holy truth by means of the press, are most important,—any person who has any gifts in that direction should be sure to use them. Why are writers upon religion often so dull, while the world commands talent and vivacity? What thousands of pens are running every day upon the idlest nonsense, and making booksellers' shelves groan with the literature of fiction! Are there none who, with splendour of diction or in humbler guise, could write interestingly of the gospel, and tell of its power among the sons of men? If there be in the tribe of Zebulun any that handle the pen of the ready writer, let them not keep back from the help of the Lord—the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Another form of gift that belongs to us is influence. We have all of us influence of some sort,—some more, some less. What an influence the parent has. To a great extent you mould your children's lives. Some of us owe what we never can repay to our mothers. What they have done for us shall make us grateful to them even when they shall slumber in the dust. The nurse girl who has the care of little children should be very careful, for a remark she may make without intention may shape the character,—ay, mar or bless the child's character throughout eternity. And you who associate daily with working men—is there enough among Christian masters of earnest zeal to use a holy and affectionate influence among the employed? If classes are alienated one from the other, as it is to be feared they are, is it not because we meet each other just as a matter of business, and that there is little of anything like Christian affection and communion between the one and the other? Indeed some scout the idea as ridiculous, and tell me I know very little of the world to dream of such a thing. I will leave that question to the day which shall reveal all things, and I think I know who will prove to be right. Let every one of us reckon up what influence he has, and having done so, let us ask God's grace that we may use it aright. I shall not go into details here. You are all affecting those round about you for good or evil. As Christian men

you are either leading others to Christ even unconsciously, or else you are deadening their consciences, and leading them to think there is not much in religion after all; and surely you would not wish to do that. You have the gift of influence: I would stir you up to use it.

Many of the elder members of the church have another gift, namely, experience. Certainly, experience cannot be purchased, nor taught; it is given us of the Lord who teacheth us to profit. It is a peculiar treasure each man wins for himself as he is led through the wilderness. An experienced Christian is put in the church on purpose that he may guide the inexperienced; that he may help those who are distressed with a word of comfort derived from his own experience of God's helping hand in time of trouble, that he may warn the heedless by the mischiefs he himself has suffered through carelessness. Now, when an experienced Christian merely uses his experience for his own comfort, or as a standard by which to judge his fellow Christians, or makes use of it for self-exaltion as though he were infinitely superior to the most zealous young men, such a man mars his talent, does mischief with it, and makes himself heavily responsible. Dear brethren and sisters, I, who am so young in years compared with many of you, beseech you who have long walked in the ways of godliness to use your experience continually in your visitation of the sick, in your conversations with the poor, in your meetings with young beginners, in your dealings with backsliders, let your paths drop fatness; let the anointing God has given you fall upon those who are round about you. May you be of such a sort as a certain clergyman I heard of the other day. I asked a poor woman "What sort of man is he?" She said, "He is such a sort of man, sir, that if he comes to see you you know he has been there." I understood what she meant: he left behind him some godly saying, weighty advice, holy consolation, or devout reflection, which she could remember after he had left her cottage door. May our venerable friends always have this said of them.

Another gift which many have is the gift of prayer—of prayer with power, in private for the church and with sinners. There be some who have learned by long practice how to knock at heaven's door, so as to get a readier opening of the door than others. Numbers of these have coupled with this the gift of utterance in public prayer. Such dear friends ought not to be absent from the prayer meeting, except when absolute necessity compels. They should not only be content with coming to prayer meetings that are established, but they should stir up the gift that is in them, and try to establish others in neglected places. There was never a period when the church had too much prayer. "The Sacraments," as they are called, may have been unduly exalted, but who has ever unduly exalted prayer. Bible-readings may degenerate into mere discussion, and even preaching into a show of oratory; but prayer has vital elements about it which survive many an injury. Alas! Alas! for churches that have given up prayer meetings. You shall judge of the presence of God by the prayer meeting, as accurately as you shall judge the temperature of the air by the thermometer. It is one of the truest signs that God is with the people when they pray, and it is one of the darkest signs that he has departed when prayer is lacking. You who have sweet communion with God in private, look upon your prevalence

on the knee not only as a blessing for yourselves, but as a gift that is bestowed upon you for the good of others.

There is another gift which is a very admirable one. It is the gift of conversation, not a readiness for chit chat and gossip—(he who has that wretched propensity may bury it in the earth and never dig it up again)—but the gift of leading conversation, of being what George Herbert called the "master-gunner;" when we have that, we should most conscientiously use it for God. There lived some fifty years or so ago a set of great table-talkers, who were asked out to dine because of their lively conversational powers. Now if this be in any of you never waste it in mere pleasantries, but say something worth the saying, and aim at the highest results. Remember Jesus was a mighty table-talker, as the Evangelists take care to note. I wish I could with discreet adroitness break in upon a conversation in a railway carriage and turn it round to the Saviour—turn it round to something worth speaking of. I often envy those of my brethren who can go up to individuals and talk to them with freedom. I do not always find myself able to do so, though when I have been divinely aided I have had a large reward. When a Christian man can get hold of a man and talk to him, it is like one of the old men-of-war laying alongside a French ship and giving her a broadside, making every timber shiver, and at last sending her to the bottom. How many a soul has been brought to Christ by the loving personal exhortations of Christian people who know how to do it? To be able, like Elijah, to stretch yourselves upon the dead child, to put your hands upon his hands, your feet upon his feet and breathe the life by God's help into the dead—oh, some of you can do this better, perhaps, than those who are called to speak to hundreds and thousands. Do use it if you have the ability; and try to get the ability if you have it not. Peradventure you possess it, and have not found it out. No unconverted person should come to this place without your speaking to him; and as to a person attending the Tabernacle three Sabbath days without being spoken to by some Christian, it ought to be an impossibility, and would be if all were in a right warm-hearted state, earnestly desiring the salvation of others. May God teach us, if we can converse personally with individuals, to furbish up the gift, keep it in good condition, and continually use it.

My inventory of the gifts which are in us is not complete, nor is it intended to be. Each person may have a separate gift. Even the gift to be able to lie still and suffer is not a small one. The gift of being able to be poor and contented is not to be despised. The gift of nursing the sick, or of interesting children, should be lovingly employed, neither ought any talent to be wrapped in a napkin. But, whatever it is, the word is, "Stir up the gift which is in thee."

II. And this brings us, secondly, to the consideration of—HOW WE ARE TO STIR UP OUR GIFTS.

First, we should do it by examination to see what gifts we really have. There should be an overhauling of all our stores to see what we have of capital entrusted to our stewardship. May I ask you for a minute to sit quietly and take stock of all God has given you. Remember you shall assess yourself, for I am sure your manhood, not to say your self-esteem, will not let you put yourself down as utterly without gifts. If somebody were to speak of you depreciatingly, you would very soon defend

yourself, and argue for your own capacity in many departments. I would put you on your mettle, and bring you to acknowledge your capabilities. Now think of all the abilities you have, dear brother, dear sister. What has God trusted you with? Add up each item, and compute the total sum. What trading-money hast thou of thy Lord's? To whom much is given, of him much will be required. What, then, has been given to thee? Such an enquiry will help you to stir up the gift that is in you. The self-examination of every mental faculty, every spiritual attainment, every form of characteristic force or individual influence, will be an excellent commencement for a more vigorous course of action. Enquire what you can do, what more you could do, what more you might learn to do, what more you ought at least to attempt. Diminish nothing from the just amount of your possibilities; and it will greatly tend to stir you up, if you then enquire, "How far have I done what I could do? How far have I used all that has been committed to me? How much of my life has been allowed to rust, and how much has been made bright by wear and tear in the service of the Master?" It is not a pleasant duty to which I have invited you. You would be much more gratified if I asked you to consider some precious promise of the covenant, and certainly I should find it more consolatory to myself, but this is necessary. Sweet things are pleasant, but sharp things are often the more beneficial. Pillows for our heads are not our main desire; we wish, as soldiers of the cross, to be found faithful first of all and above all. We shall have to give an account before God. Oh, let us give an account before ourselves now, in the forum of our own conscience, and so stir up the gift that is in us.

The next mode of stirring up our gift is to consider to what use we could put the talents we possess. To what use could I put my talents in my family? Am I doing all I could for the children? Have I laboured all I ought for my wife's conversion—my husband's conversion? Then about the neighbourhood—is there nothing more that I could do for the salvation of my poor godless neighbours? Perhaps I see them drunken, profane, unchaste, irreligious, full of all manner of disobedience to God, can I not by God's grace uplift them? They never come to a place of worship: have I done all I could to get them there? I was not placed in that neighbourhood without an object. If it is a dark part of London, I am put there to be a lamp if I am a Christian. Am I shining, then? Some people prefer to live where there is light, and for themselves the choice is wise; but methinks, for usefulness, loving hearts might prefer to live in bad districts that they might do good. Are you doing all you can for Jesus? Come, answer like an honest man! Having done so, I have more work for your self-inspection. Will you examine yourself in every relation in which you stand. As a master, stir up your gift in reference to those you employ. As a servant, stir up the gift towards your fellow servants. As a trader, stir up your gift in reference to those with whom you come in contact. Are you a sailor? Have you stepped in here to-night? What an opportunity you have, my friend, in landing on many shores, of doing something for Christ, here and there and everywhere. Are you a commercial traveller, and do you go to many places? Surely you might travel for our Lord with gospel wares, to be distributed without money and

without price, and yet attend to your own calling none the less. If our churches were in a right state of spiritual health, men would not first say, "What can I do to make money?" but "What can I do to serve Christ, for I will take up a trade subserviently to that." But if we cannot bring men to that point, we must at least say (to all of you who profess to be Christians, at any rate), in whatever condition you are placed, high or low, rich or poor, you should live unto Christ. You should each enquire, "What can I do for the Lord in my present condition? What peculiar service does my position involve?" In this way, dear friends, stir up the gift that is in you.

But, next, stir it up not merely by consideration and examination, but by actually using it. We talk much of working, but working is better than talking about working: "to get really at it, and to do something for soul-winning and spreading abroad the glory of God, is infinitely better than planning and holding committees. Away with windbags, let us get to acts and deeds. None of us know what we can do till we try. The sportsman will tell you that there may be many birds in a field, but you know not how many till you walk through, and then you discover them and see them on the wing. When the wheel turns you will be able to see the force of the current. You will see the speed of the horse when you put him to his best. Work, work! and the tool that is blunt will get an edge by being used. Shine, and the light you have shall grow in the very act of shining! He who has done one thing will find himself capable of doing two; and doing two will be able to accomplish four; and having achieved the four will soon go on to twelve, and from twelve to fifty; and so by growing multiples he will enlarge his power to serve God by using the ability he has.

Does this tire you? Does my subject seem too much like salvation by works? Nothing is further from my thoughts, I am not now speaking upon salvation at all, neither am I addressing those who are seeking after salvation; I am speaking to you who have been saved already by the grace of God. You are saved, and on that point all is done. You are resting in the finished work of Christ. Should it ever seem hard to you to be stirred up to serve him? Let the vision of his tearful face come up to you. Behold his thorn-crowned brow! Let him turn his back on you, and mark the gashes the Roman scourges made. Look at him—a spectacle of blood and love! And is it possible that any service for him can by you be considered hard? To burn at a stake! if we could do it a thousand times, he well deserves that we should make the sacrifice! To give him every pulse, and every drop of blood, and every breath we breathe—he well deserves it; glory be to his name, he merits our all a thousand times over. I shall not fear to press upon you again and again and again, that you use the gifts which are in you by actual service of so precious a master.

And then, dear friends, in addition to using our gift, every one of us should try to improve it. We have for years endeavoured to stir up the young Christians of this congregation to educate themselves. By our evening classes it is intended that young men who preach in the street may get education in order to preaching better the gospel of Christ; and out of this congregation have gone hundreds whom God has owned as ministers of Christ, and many such are being trained now; I would have

every man put himself in training. I think every man ought to feel, "I have been Christ's man with two talents; I will be Christ's man with ten if I can. If now I do not thoroughly understand the doctrines of his gospel, I will try to understand them; I will read, and search, and learn." We want an intelligent race of Christians, not an affected race of boasters of culture, mental fops, who pretend to know a great deal and know nothing; but we need hard students of the word, adepts in theology, like the Puritans of old. Romanism will never do much with people who know the doctrines of the word of God; it is a bat, and hates sunlight. Every one of us ought to be students and learners, trying to get more ability for usefulness as well as to be built up ourselves in our most holy faith. To the younger members of our churches especially we speak this. Give yourselves to reading, study, and prayer. Grow mentally and spiritually. You teach in the class; you do well, but could not you do better if you knew more? And if you address children in the Sabbath schools we are glad of it, but would you not do that better if you studied more perfectly the truth of God? Apollos was not ashamed to be taught, nor need the most successful labourer be ashamed to learn. Improve your gift, for that is one way of stirring it up.

And then pray over your gifts: that is a blessed way of stirring them up—to go before God, and spread out your responsibilities before him. In my own case I have often to cry, "Lord, thou hast given me this congregation, and O it is hard to be clear of the blood of them all, and to speak with affection, and prudence, and courage to all, so as not to leave one unwarned, unhelped, untaught. Help me, my Lord, that I may leave no one without his portion of meat in due season. Who is sufficient for these things? Only thy grace is sufficient for me." It stirs one up to preach with all his might, when he has laid before God in prayer his weakness, and the ability which God has given him, too, and asked that the weakness may be consecrated to God's glory and the ability accepted to the Lord's praise. Should we not do just the same, whatever our calling is—take it to the Lord and say, "Assist me, great God, to live to thee. If thy grace in me be only as a handful of meal and a little oil; make it hold out—make it hold out. It is not much I can do, my Master; help me to do it well, and to continue steadfast and unwearied in it." Pray over yourself, as it were: put your whole self upon the altar, and then let the drink-offering be the pouring out of your tears before God in prayer that he would be pleased to accept you, to qualify you, to anoint you, to direct you, and bless you in all that you do. This would be the most excellent manner of stirring up the gift that is in you. O Spirit of the living God, lead all thy people to downright, earnest, and actual service of the Redeemer, and especially work in us to that end.

III. I will not linger longer there, but close with the third observation: WHY IS IT THAT WE SHOULD STIR UP THE GIFT THAT IS IN US. There are many replies to this. One or two will answer our purpose.

We should stir up the gift that is in us, because all we shall do when we have stirred ourselves to the utmost, and when the Spirit of God has strengthened us to the highest degree, will still fall far short of what our dear Lord and Master deserves at our hands. Ah! what must Jesus think of us when he remembers his own love. Was there ever

such a contrast between his furnace heated seven times hotter, and our iceberg spirits? He spared not himself, and we are always sparing ourselves. He gives us everything to the last rag, and hangs naked on the cross: we keep almost all to ourselves, and count self-sacrifice to be hard. He labours, is weary, and yet ceases not: we are a little weary, and straightway we faint. He continued to preach on, notwithstanding all the ill return men made; but we take offence and throw up our work, because we are not appreciated as we should be. Oh, the little things which put some workers out of temper and out of heart. Oh, the looks or the not-looks, the words, or the silence, that will make some spirits give up any place, and any service, and any work. "Forbearing one another" seems to have gone out of fashion with many people. "Forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," is forgotten. Brethren and sisters, if being door mats for Christ for all the church to wipe their feet upon would honour him, we ought to think it a great glory to be so used. Among genuine Christians the contention is for the lowest place: among sham Christians the controversy is for the higher positions. Some will ask the question now-a-days —"Which is the higher office—that of elder or deacon," and so on. Oh, what triviality! When the Master was going up to Jerusalem to die, there was a contention among the disciples which of them should be the greatest; and so it is with us; at times when grace is low, our opinion of ourselves is very high, and then our love to Christ is little, so that we soon take affront, and are quick to resent any little insults, as we think them to be, where perhaps nothing of the kind was meant. Beloved, may we be saved from all this littleness of soul!

And remember what obligations we are under to our Master—how we should have been dead in trespasses and sins but for him—how we should have been in hell but for him—how our expectations to-night would have been "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation but for him;" but we are washed and cleansed, and on the way to heaven, and we owe it all to him. Therefore let us stir up the gift that is in us, and serve him with all our might.

Another reason is that these are stirring times. If *we* are not stirring everybody else is. The church of God, it seems to me, is travelling along the road to heaven in a broad-wheel waggon, and all the world is going its own way by express speed. If men become at all earnest in the cause of God, wordly critics shout out "Fanaticism! Excitement!" Did you ever stand on the Paris Bourse—ever hear the raving, raging excitement of those stock-jobbers as they are trying to buy various forms of scrip! Nobody says, "Look at these men! See how fanatical they are!" No, they expect to see excitement on the Bourse; but if we were half as excited for God and his gospel, there would be a hue and cry all over the country, "Here's a set of madmen! Here's a set of fanatics let loose." Of good Mr. Rowland Hill they said, "The dear old gentleman's too earnest." "Why, said he, "when I was at Wotton-under-Edge I saw a piece of a gravel pit fall in upon two or three men, when I was walking by, so I went into Wotton as fast as my aged legs could carry me, and I shouted with all my might 'Help! Help! Help!' and nobody said "the dear old man's too earnest." Oh, no; you may be as earnest as you like about saving people's lives, but if their souls awaken your sympathy, some

lukewarm professor or other is sure to be ready with a wet blanket to cool your ardour. And yet were there ever times in which the wheels of life revolved so swiftly as now. The world marches with giant strides: everybody is up and awake, but the church is asleep to a great extent. For other things men labour, and tug, and toil, and make sacrifices; for an idea they slaughter their fellow-creatures; for the unity of a race they fatten fields with blood, and make rivers run with gore; but to preach Christ, and snatch sinners from the jaws of hell, they require of us to be chilled, and insist that we must not be too earnest, we must not go too fast; we must be prudent, we must be cool! From "prudence" and "coolness" good Lord deliver us! From "decorum" and "propriety" (wherein they stand in the way of our winning souls) good Lord deliver us! And from every conventionality, and every idol that has been set up among us, which prevents our being thoroughly useful and grandly serviceable to the cause of God, good Lord deliver us! Because these are stirring times, we ought to stir up the gift that is in us.

And then, again, we must stir up our gift because it needs stirring. The gifts and graces of Christian men are like a coal fire which frequently requires stirring as well as feeding with fuel. You must not stir it up too much; the poker does not give heat; and, stirring up a man of itself does not make him better; indeed, it is as injurious to a weak man to stir him up as it would be to an expiring fire in the grate; but yet there must be stirring, and fires go out sometimes for the want of it. There are times with us when we become dull and heavy, doing little or nothing,—restless, indifferent,—and then it is that we require rebuking. If there be a solid bottom of real grace in us, we only need the poker that we be stirred up, and straightway the fire begins to burn. How I like to stir some of you up! I remember a dear brother dropping in one Thursday night to hear the word preached—an excellent Christian, but sluggish, and the Lord touched his heart with the word spoken, and he began to preach in the streets of the city where he resides. He has now one of the largest houses of prayer, and God has given him hundreds of souls. He only wanted stirring up. Is there no other brother here, who, hearing this earnest word, shall find it like a live coal from off the altar, touching his lips and moving him to go forth and preach the word, and serve his Master according to his ability. We must then, dear friends, stir ourselves up, because if we do not, we may lose the faculty, and rob ourselves of the power of usefulness. The knife which is not used loses its edge, and the man who does not work for God loses much of his ability to do so in the future.

I shall give you another reason, and that is this. If we will but stir ourselves, beloved, or rather, if God's Holy Spirit will but stir us, we, as a church may expect very great things. I can hardly tell you how comforted I felt last Monday evening. I said on Sabbath day, "The Elders and Deacons will meet to pray, and those of you who love souls and are concerned about them will kindly come too, at six o'clock." I was glad to see many of you who I know love the Lord fervently, and through that warm prayer meeting which we had before our more public gathering, we felt that we had laid hold upon our God. I know there is a blessing

coming. I am sure of it. I hear "a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." The Lord is with us. He never made his people agonize in secret, and join together publicly in deep soul earnestness, without intending to bless them. We might as well fear when the months are warm, that there will be no ripening of the wheat, as to say when Christian's hearts are warm towards God that there will be no conversions. It can't be. Enquiring saints always make enquiring sinners. If we enquire of God for sinners, sinners will soon enquire for themselves. Up, therefore; up, therefore, beloved! Bestir yourselves, for God is stirring us.

And remember, there will be a great stir by-and-bye. Business will all end; politics will be done with, and all the matters in which you are concerned will be closed eternally. What a stir there will be in that day, when we shall stand before the Judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body! What a stir about ourselves! What a stir about others! Where will they be? Will they be on the right hand, or on the left? Shall I see my boys in heaven, or will they be cast out? What a stir there will be about your husband or your wife! What a stir there will be about your neighbours! Think of it! Think of it, I say, and be stirred now! If they die as they are, they will be damned: they must be. They must sink into hell! There is no hope of their escape if they die unsaved. What a stir there will be throughout all the nations in that day! And, surely, if we look at it in the light of eternity, in the light of that tremendous day when Christ, with clouds, shall come; we shall feel that there is nothing worth living for but serving God; that the very core and centre of all life is to bring glory to God by bringing sinners to Jesus Christ. God grant you may live as if you expected to die. We ought always to preach as though we should go out of the pulpit into heaven; always to pray in that way; and always to spend every day as if we had not another day to spend. For this we need much of the Holy Spirit's power. But he rests upon his people. May he come and rest upon us now, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Rome, Nov. 5, 1872.

BELOVED FRIENDS,—You will be glad to know that cessation from the cares and labours of my office has already had a most beneficial effect upon me, and I hope at the close of my forty days to come home to you more fit to serve you than I have been for some time. I am sorry that it is needful to cease from the delightful work of my ministry, but necessity has no law; and it is better both for you and for me that I retire occasionally than be broken down altogether, or suffer long sicknesses.

My heart longs to see the kingdom of God more greatly promoted among us and by us. Here are whole nations in the dark, and how little are we doing to give them the lamp of life. Alas, there are many at home in like condition, and we do not bestir ourselves. Jesus Christ demands of saved souls that they do their utmost to promote his praise; the unsaved he calls to accept his finished salvation; may both classes be obedient to him.

I hope there will be at least one hundred to be added to our number on my return. Pray and labour for this. May the meetings for prayer never flag in any degree. Keep them up better in my absence than when I am with you. Grace and peace be unto you all, with the deacons and elders, and my dear brother. I send herewith my love to you all in Christ Jesus. Longing greatly again to join in the great congregation at the Tabernacle, I am most anxious that those who supply my place should be very greatly blessed among you. Brethren, pray for them, and for me also, and for my household, as I also do for you all.

Do not permit any good work for the Lord to lag because your Pastor is away. God bless and comfort you all.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A VISIT TO THE TOMB.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—Matthew xxviii. 6.

THE holy women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, came to the sepulchre, hoping to find there the body of their Lord, which they intended to embalm. Their intention was good; their will was accepted before God; but, for all that, their desire was not gratified, for the simple reason that it was contrary to God's design: it was at variance with even what Christ had foretold and plainly declared to them. "He is not here; for he is risen, *as he said.*" I gather from this, that there may be good desires in our hearts as believers, and we may earnestly try to carry them out, and yet we may never succeed in them, because through our ignorance we have not understood, or through our obliviousness we have happened to forget, some word of Christ that stands in our way. I have known this to be the case in prayer. We have prayed, and we have not received, because we had no warrant in the word of God to ask the thing we did. Peradventure there was some prohibition in the Scriptures, which ought to have restrained us from offering the prayer. We have thought in our daily life, amidst the pursuits of business, that if we could gain such and such a position, then we should honour God; yet though we have sought it vigorously, and prayed about it earnestly, we have never gained it. God had never intended that we should; and, had we succeeded in compassing our own project, it might have been evil rather than advantageous, an entail of trouble instead of a heritage of joy. We were seeking great things for ourselves, we forgot that expostulation of the Lord, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Do not, therefore, expect to realise all those desires which seem to you to

be pure and proper. They may not happen to run in the right channel. It may be that there is a word from the Lord that forbids your ever seeing them brought to pass.

These good women found that they had lost the presence of him who had been their greatest delight. "He is not here," must have sounded like a funeral knell to them. They expected to find him: he was gone. But then the grief must have been taken out of their hearts when it was added, "He is risen." I gather from this, that if God takes away from me any one good thing, he will be sure to justify himself in having so done, and that very frequently he will magnify his grace by giving me something infinitely better. Did Mary think it would be a good thing to find the dead body of her Lord? Perhaps it would have given her a kind of melancholy satisfaction. So she thought, according to her poor judgment. The Lord took that good thing away. But then Christ was risen, and now to hear of him, then presently to see him, was not that an infinitely better thing? Hast thou lost anything of late around which thy heart had intertwisted all its tendrils? Thou shalt find that there is good cause for the privation. The Lord never takes away a silver blessing without intending to confer on us a golden gain. Depend upon it, for wood he will give iron, and for iron he will give brass, and for brass he will give silver, and for silver he will give gold. All his takings are but preliminaries to larger giving. Hast thou lost thy child? What if thou find thy Lord more dear than ever? One smile of thy Lord will be better to thee than all the cheerful frolics of thy child. Is he not better to thee than ten sons? Hast thou lost the familiar companion who once cheered thee along the vale of life? Thou shalt now by that loss be driven closer to thy Saviour; his promises shall be more sweet to thee, and the Blessed Spirit shall reveal his truth more clearly to thee. Thou shalt be a gainer by thy loss. There is many a plant that has been protected by a great tree, whose spreading branches covered it from the drenching rain and the downfall of the hail. Anon, the tree has been cut down by the cruel woodman's axe. At the fall of that tree the little plant has been ready to cry out for fear. Henceforth it will remain unprotected. Not so; these sad bodings quickly vanish; for now the sun has come upon it as it never came before, and the dews have fallen more plenteously, and the rain has penetrated to its roots; and the little tender plant springs up to a stature it could never otherwise have known, seeing it was dwarfed by the comfort it enjoyed. Thou shalt find that full many of the comforts taken from thee were drawbacks to thy high culture, and in the absence of them thou shalt get an abundant compensation, a tenfold blessing. "He is not here,"—that is sorrowful. But, "He is risen,"—this is gladsome. Christ, the dead one, thou canst not see. Thou canst not tenderly embalm that

blessed body. But Christ, the living one, thou shalt see; and at his feet thou shalt be able to prostrate thyself; and from his lips thou shalt hear the gladsome words, "Go, tell my brethren that I am risen from the dead." That lesson may be worth your remembering. If God apply it to your soul it may yield you rich comfort. Should the Lord take away one joy from you, he will give you another and a better one. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." You never deny your children any pure gratification, I am sure, without intending their real good. How many of you have a way, when you put your child to a little self-denial, of making it up to him again so that he is no loser by it. And your heavenly Father will deal quite as gently and tenderly with you his children.

With these two preliminary remarks, we proceed to our text itself. And it may be well to say that some of us have been this afternoon to the funeral of a dear friend and deacon of this church; and as such, the thoughts that stir in our breasts, and the words that will flow from our lips this evening would be more appropriate if the open grave were before us. Let us stand there in imagination; and conceive, if you will, even yonder bell,—though it often hinders our devotions so that I wonder why any Christian people need annoy other Christian people with it,—to be a funeral knell for us. Let it help to bear us on the wings of sound to the grave, that we may the better realise the position in which these meditations will be congruous to the occasion.

The text contains, first, *an assurance;* and secondly, *an invitation.* First, an assurance: "He is not here, for he is risen;" secondly, an invitation: "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

I. The assurance: "He is not here, for he is risen."

Jesus Christ has really RISEN FROM THE DEAD. What though savans and sciolists have tried to prove that this well-attested fact is but a fabulous myth? There is not one doctrine of holy writ which has not been in like manner spirited away. At first they denied out and out that such things ever happened, and said that they were a pure invention. But afterwards, when abundant evidence was brought to prove a resurrection, this gross incredulity gave place to a more refined scepticism. Yet beyond a doubt it can be shown that there is as much evidence for the resurrection of Christ as for any fact in history. There is, probably, no fact in history which is so fully proven and corroborated as the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, who was nailed to the cross, and died, and was buried, did rise again. As we believe the histories of Julius Cæsar—as we accept the statements of Tacitus—we are bound on the same grounds, even as historical documents, to accept the testimony of Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, and of those persons who were eye-witnesses of his death, and who saw him after he had risen from the dead. That Jesus Christ rose from the dead is not an allegory and a symbol, but it

is a reality. There he lay dead, friend or foe to witness,—a corpse fit to be committed to the grave. Handle him, and see. It is the very Christ you knew in life. It is the very same. Look into those eyes. Were there ever such eyes in any other human form? Behold him! You can see the impress of sorrow on his face. Was there ever any visage so marred as his, any sorrow so real in its effects? That is the Emperor of Misery, the Prince of all Mourners, the King of Sorrow! There he lies, unmistakably the same. Now, mark the nail-prints. There went the iron through those blessed hands; and there his feet were pierced; and there is the gash that found out the pericardium, and divided the heart, and brought forth the marvellous blood and water from his side. It is he, the selfsame Christ! And the holy women lift limb by limb, and wrap him in linen, and put the spices about him, such as they had brought in their haste, and they lay him down in that place—in that new tomb.

Now, let it be known and understood that our faith is that those very limbs that lay stiff and cold in death became warm with life again—that the very body, with its bones and blood and flesh, which lay there, became again instinct with life, and came forth into a glorious existence. Those hands broke the piece of honeycomb and the fish in the presence of the disciples; and those lips partook thereof; and he held out those wounds and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and put it into the print of the nails;" and he bared his side, the selfsame side, and said, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." He was no phantom, no spectre. As he himself said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." He was real man, as much after the resurrection as he had been before; and he is real man in glory now, even as he was when here below. He has gone up: the cloud has received him out of our sight. The selfsame Christ who said unto Peter, "Lovest thou me?"—the selfsame Jesus who said to all his disciples, "Come and dine,"—a real man has really risen from a real death into a real life. Now, we always want to have that doctrine stated to us plainly, for though we believe it we do not always realise it; and even if we have realised it, it is good to hear it again, so as to let our minds be confirmed about it. The resurrection is as literal a fact as any other fact stated in history, and is so to be believed among us. "He is not here: for he has risen."

Pursue the narrative, beloved, and you will see that when our Lord Jesus Christ had risen on that occasion, being quickened from the slumbers of death, it was not only true that he had really risen from the sepulchre, but he had risen in order to his being further raised up in his ascension into the glory which he now possesses at the right hand of the Father. When he had burst the iron bonds of the grave, the disciples had this for their consolation—that he was now beyond the

reach of his enemies. During the few days that our Lord lingered upon earth, none of his enemies attempted to do him hurt. Against him not a dog dare move his tongue. We can scarcely tell why, but so it was. There seemed to be a remarkable acquiescence in the minds of all his foes during the time in which he sojourned amongst his people below. He was beyond the reach of his enemies. They could hurt him no more. And it is so now. He is not here, in another sense; and he is now beyond the reach of all his malignant adversaries. Does not this cheer you? It does me. No Judas can betray the Master now to be seized by Roman guards. No Pilate can now take him and suborn justice and give him over to be crucified, though he knows him to be innocent. No Herod can now mock him with his men of war: no soldiery can now spit in his dear face. Now none can buffet him, or blindfold him, and say unto him, "Prophesy who it is that smote thee." The head, the dear majestic head, of Jesus can never now be crowned with thorns again, and the busy feet that ran on errands of mercy can never be pierced by the nails any more. Men shall no longer strip him naked, and stand and exult over his agonies. He is gone beyond their reach. Now they may rail and seek to spite him through his people, who are the members of his body. Now they may rage; but God has set him at his own right hand, and he is inaccessible to their malice. It comforts me, just as I think it would comfort the soldier in the day of battle, when he saw the fight going very hard, to feel that the commander whom he loved was out of bullet's range. "There," he would say, "you may smite us as you will. The bullets may rain red death through our ranks, but our commander-in-chief, upon whom all the conflict hangs, is safe." Oh, blessed are those words, and blessed was the pen that wrote them, and blessed was the Spirit who dictated them,—"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father." It matters not, dear brethren, what becomes of us poor common soldiers. We feel as if our being slandered, our being disgraced, our being persecuted, our being put to death, would not matter the turn of a straw in view of the momentous issues, so long as the head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now, and he who stood at Pilate's bar to be condemned, now sits on his Father's throne, waiting till he shall come to judge the princes and kings of the earth.

With regard to our Lord's not being here, but having risen, it should console us to think that he is now beyond all pain, as well as beyond all personal attack. I comforted myself in thus reflecting of our friend who is lately deceased. He was struck, as many of you

know, suddenly with paralysis, and he has lain some six weeks. If it had pleased God he might have lain six years or sixteen years, and it would have been a very painful thing to see him with life still in the body but with a mind sorely darkened. We are thankful—I feel personally grateful to God—that our friend has fallen asleep,—that he has escaped from the miseries of this present evil life. But how much more grateful ought we to be concerning our dear Lord, whom our soul loves! Oh, can you bear to think of him, that he had not where to lay his head? Who among us would not have left his couch to give him a night's rest?—ay, and have forsworn the bed for ever if we might have given him soft repose. Would we not ourselves have taken to the hillside, and been there all night, till our head was wet with dew, if we might have gained rest for him? He is worth ten thousand of us; and did it not seem as if it were too much for him to have to suffer—to be homeless and houseless? He hungered, brethren; he was athirst; he was weary; he was faint. He suffered our sicknesses: we are told that he took them upon himself. Often had he the heartache. He knew what "cold mountains and the midnight air" were to chill the body; and he knew what the bleak atmosphere and bitter privation were to freeze the soul. He passed through innumerable griefs and woes. From the first blood-shedding at his birth, down to the last blood-shedding at his death, it seemed as if sorrow had marked him as her peculiar child. Always was he troubled, tempted, vexed, assailed, assaulted, molested, by Satan, by wicked men, and by the evils that are without! Now there is no more of that for him; and we are glad that he is not here for that reason. He is no child of poverty now; no carpenter's shop for him now; no smockfrock of the peasant, woven from the top throughout, now; no mountain-side and heather for his resting place now; no jeering crowds around him now; no stones taken up to stone him now; no sitting on the well, weary, and saying, "Give me to drink;" no needing that he should be supplied with food when he is hungry. Now no more can there be any scourgings and flagellations. No more will he give "his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." No piercing his hands and his feet now; no burning thirst upon the bloody tree; no cry of "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani." God's waves and billows went over him once, but no more can they assail him. He was brought into the dust of death, and his soul was exceeding sorrowful once. He is beyond all that. The sea is passed, and he has come to the Fair Havens, where no storms can beat upon him. He has reached his joy; he has entered into his rest; and he has received his reward. Brethren and sisters, let us be glad about this. Let us enter into the joy of our Lord. Let us be glad, because he is glad;—happy, because he is happy. Oh. that we might feel our hearts leaping within

us, though we for a little while longer are on the field of battle, because he is clean gone from it, and now is acknowledged and adored King of kings and Lord of lords.

The fact that our Lord has risen has not only these consoling elements about it, with reference to him, but we must remember that it is the guarantee, to every one of us who believe in him, of our own resurrection. The apostle, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, makes the whole argument for the resurrection of the body hinge upon this one question—did Christ rise from the dead? If he did, then all his people must rise with him. He was a representative man, and as the Lord the Saviour rose, so all his followers must. Settle the question that Christ rose, and you have settled the question that all who are in him, and conformed to his image, must rise too.

As for ourselves, it is certain that we believers in Jesus, if we shall die and be put into the grave, will be fed upon by the worms, —will go back to mother earth and moulder. For my part, I would never wrap the body in lead, or do it up in any way that would keep it from melting back speedily to the earth from which it came. It seems fittest and holiest to let it speedily moulder back to its native dust. But here is the appointed issue. No matter what becomes of that dust, and through what transitions it may pass. It is true the roots of trees may drink up this form: it is true it may turn to grass and flowers to be fed upon by beasts: the winds may waft it thousands of miles away atom from atom: bone may be scattered from its bone: but, as surely, as the Saviour rose, we shall rise too. We say not that each actual particle of this flesh shall rise: it is not necessary for the identity of the body that it should be so; but still the body shall be identical, and the selfsame body that is sown in the earth shall rise again from the earth, in a beauty and a glory of which we know but little as yet,—be assured of it. That body of the dear child of God to which you bade farewell some years ago, shall rise again. Those eyes that you closed—those very eyes—shall see the King in his beauty in the land that is very far off. Those ears that could not hear you when you spoke the last tender word—those ears shall hear the eternal melodies. That heart that grew stone cold and still, when death laid his cold hand upon the bosom, shall beat again with newness of life, and leap with joy amidst the festivities of the home-bringing, when Christ the Bridegroom shall be married to his church, the bride. That self-same body!—Was it not the temple of the Holy Ghost? Was it not redeemed with blood? Surely it shall rise at the trump of the archangel and at the voice of God! Be thou sure of this: be thou sure of it,—sure for thy friend and sure for thyself. And fear not death. What is it? The grave is but a bath wherein our body, like Esther, buries itself in spices to make it sweet and fresh for the embrace of the

glorious King in immortality. It is but the wardrobe where we lay aside the garment for a while. It shall come forth cleansed and purified, with many a golden spangle on it which was not there before. It was a work-day dress when we put it off; it will be a Sabbath robe when we put it on, and it will be fit for Sabbath wear. We may even long for evening to undress, if there is to be such a waking and such a putting on of garments in the presence of the King.

Further—not to linger too long on any one thought—let us remember that our Lord's not being here, but having risen, has in it this consolatory thought, that he has gone where he can best protect our interests. He is an advocate for us. Where should the advocate be but in the King's court? He is preparing a place for us. Where should he be who is preparing a place, but there—making it ready? We have a very active adversary, who is busy accusing us. Is it not well that we have one who can meet him face to face, and put the accuser of the brethren to silence? Methinks, if Christ were here at this very moment in proper person, we should be inclined to say to him, "Good Master, thou canst serve us well here. Thy going about to heal the sick and teach the ignorant is very blessed; and we love to see thee; the vision of thy face makes earth heaven to us; yet still, our great interests demand thy absence; for, good Lord, our prayers want some one to present them at the throne. As one by one our prayers go up to heaven, we would not have thee here, and send them away to a place where thou art not. Besides, where the enemy goes to accuse, we want thee there to defend; and since our best heritage is up above, we want a keeper who shall preserve it for us. Good Master, it is expedient that thou go away." We have not to say that to him, for he is gone; and if ever the one Christ was of double value, if ever the advantage of his position enhanced the value of his services, it is now that he is in heaven. He would be precious here, but he is more precious there. He is doing more for us in heaven, than it could have been possible for him to do for us here below, as far as our finite intelligence can judge, and as truly as his infinite wisdom can pronounce. Meanwhile his absence is well compensated by the presence of his own Spirit; and his presence there is well consecrated by his personal administration of sacred service for our sake. All is well in heaven, for Jesus is there. The crown is safe, and the harp is secure, and the blessed heritage of each tribe of Israel all secure, for Christ is keeping it. He is, to the glory of God, the representative and preserver of his saints.

And does not this truth, that Christ is not here, but is gone, fall upon our ears with a sweet force as it constrains us to feel that this is the reason why our heart should not be here? "He is not here:" then our heart should not be here. When this text, "He is not here," was first spoken, it meant that he was not in the grave.

He was somewhere on earth then. But now he is not here at all. Suppose you are very rich, and Satan whispers to you, "These are delightful gardens; this is a noble mansion; take thine ease:"—reply to him, "But *he* is not here; he is not here, he is risen; therefore I dare not put my heart where my Lord is not." Or, suppose thy family make thee very happy, and, as the little ones cluster around thee and sit around the fireside, thy heart is very glad; and though thou hast not much of this world's goods, yet thou hast enough, and thou hast a contented mind. Well, if Satan should say to thee, "Be well content, and make thy rest here," say to him, "No, *he* is not here; and I cannot feel that this is to be my abiding place. Only where Jesus is can my spirit rest." And have you lately started in life? Has the marriage day scarcely passed over? Are you just now beginning the merry days of youth, the sweet enchantment of this life's purest joy? Well, delight thyself therein, but still remember that *he* is not here, and therefore thou hast no right to say, "Soul, take thine ease!" Nowhere on earth is Christ, and therefore nowhere on earth may our heart build her nest. Nowhere,—no, not in the high places, or in the quiet resting places; not in the garden of nuts, or in the beds of spices; not in the tents of Kedar, or between Solomon's curtains; not even at his sacramental table, nor yet amongst the means of grace, is Christ bodily, actually, present. So we will take the sweetness of all, and the spiritual good there may be in all outward means; but still they shall all point us upward; they shall all draw us away. As the sun exhales the dew, and attracts it upward towards heaven, so shall Christ magnetise and draw our hearts away, and our thoughts up, and our longings up, and our whole spirits up, towards himself! "He is not here." Then why should I be here? Oh, get thee up, my soul; get thee up, and let all thy sweetest incense go towards him who "is not here, for he is risen."

II. I must leave that point, and come with a few words to speak upon the second point, which is AN INVITATION. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Not, beloved, that I am going to take you to Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. About that I shall not speak much. But I think any tomb might suffice to point the same sacred moral. I felt this afternoon, while I stood by the open grave in Norwood Cemetery, as though I heard a voice saying, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." It does not matter much to us now about the precise spot. He lay in the grave: that is a prominent fact that preaches to us a pithy sermon. Any grave may well suit our purpose. In the little town of Campodolcino I once realised the tomb of Christ very vividly, in an affair which had been built for Catholic pilgrims. I was up on the hillside, and I saw written upon a wall these words, "And there was a garden." It was written in Latin. I pushed open the door of this garden. It was like any other garden;

but the moment I entered there was a hand, with the words, "And in the garden there was a new tomb." Then I saw a tomb which had been newly painted, and when I came up to it I read thereon, "A new tomb wherein never man lay." I then stooped down to look inside the tomb, and I read in Latin the inscription, "Stooping down, he looked, yet went he not in." But there were the words written, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." I went in, and I saw there, graven in stone, the napkin and the linen clothes laid by themselves. I was all alone, and I read the words, "He is not here, for he is risen," graven on the floor of the tomb. Though I dread anything scenic and histrionic and popish, yet certainly I realised very much the reality of the scene,—as I have this afternoon in standing before the open tomb. I felt that Jesus Christ was really buried, really laid in the earth, and has really gone out of it, and it is good for us to come and see the place where Jesus lay.

Why should we see it?

Well, first, that we may see how condescending he was that ever he should lay in the grave. He that made heaven and earth, lay in the grave. He who gave light to angels' eyes, lay in the darkness three days. He slept in the darkness there. He without whom was not anything made that was made, was given up to death, and lay a victim of death there. Oh, wonder of wonders! Marvel of marvels! He, who had immortality and life within himself, yields himself up to the place of death!

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay," in the next place, to see how we ought to weep over the sin that laid him there. Did I make the Saviour lie in the grave? Was it needful that before my sin could be put away, my sweet Prince, whose beauties enchant all heaven, must be chill and cold in death, and actually be laid in the tomb? Must it be so? O ye murderous sins! Ye murderous sins! Ye cruel and cursed sins! Did ye slay my Saviour? Did ye find out that tender heart? Could ye never be content until you had led him to his death, and laid him there? Oh, come and weep, as you see the place where the Lord lay.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay," that you may see where you will have to lie, unless the Lord should come on a sudden. You may take the measure of that tomb, for that is where you will have to repose. It does us good to recollect, if we have great landed estates, that six feet of earth is all that will ever be our permanent freehold. We shall have to come to it—that solitary mound, with two spears' length of level ground:

> "Princes, this clay must be your bed,
> In spite of all your towers;
> The tall, the wise, the reverent head
> Must lie as low as ours."

There is no discharge in this war. To the dust return we must. So

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" to see that thou must lie there too.

But then, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," to see what good company thou wilt have there. That is where Jesus lay: doth not that comfort thee?

Why should the Christian fear the day
That lands him in the tomb;
There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume.

What more appropriate chamber for a prince's son to go to sleep in than the prince's own tomb? There slept Emmanuel. There, my body, thou mayest be well content to sleep too! What more royal couch canst thou desire than the bosom of that same mother earth, whereon the Saviour was laid to rest a while? Think, beloved, of the ten thousand saints that have gone that way to heaven. Who shall dread to go where all the flock have gone? Thou one poor timid sheep; if thou alone hadst to go through this dark valley, thou mightest well be afraid; but, oh, in addition to thy Shepherd, who marches at the head of all the flock, listen to the footsteps of the innumerable sheep that follow him. And some were very dear to thee, and fed in the same pasture with thee. Dost thou dread to go where they have gone? No; see the place where Jesus lay, to see what good company is to be had, though it may seem to be in a dark chamber.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay," to see that thou canst not lie there long. It is not the place where Jesus *is*. He is gone, and thou art to be with him where he is. Come and look at this tomb. There is no door to it. There *was* one; it was a huge rock, a monstrous stone, and none could move it. It was sealed. Seest thou not how they have set the stamp of the Sanhedrim, the stamp of the law, upon the seal, to make it sure, that none should move it? But now, if thou wilt go to the place where Jesus lay, the seal is broken, the guards are fled, the stone is gone. Such will thy tomb be. It is true they will cover thee up, and lay on the sods of green turf. If thou art wise thou wilt prefer these things to the heavy slabs of stone they sometimes lay upon the dead. That sweet mound, with here and there a daisy, like the eye of earth looking up to heaven asking mercy, or smiling in joy of expectation—there, there wilt thou sleep; but just as in the morning thou dost but open thine eyes and the curtains are updrawn, and thou comest forth, none standing in thy way, to do the labour of the day, so, when the trump of the resurrection sounds, thou wilt rise out of thy bed in perfect liberty, none hindering thee, to see the light of the day that shall go no more down for ever. You have nothing to confine you. Bolt and bar there are none: guard and watchman none; stone and seal none. "Come, see the place where Jesus lay." I would not care to go to bed in a prison, where there stood a

turnkey with his iron key to fasten me in. But I am not afraid to go to sleep in the chamber out of which I can come at the morning's call a perfectly free man! And such art thou, beloved, if thou be a believer. Thou comest to lie in a place that is open and free—a fit slumbering-place for the Lord's free men.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay," in order to celebrate the triumph over death. If Miriam sang at the Red Sea we also may sing at Jesus' tomb. If she said, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously," shall not we say the same? If all the hosts of Israel went out with her, the women with dances, and the strong men with their voices, in the song, so let all Israel go forth this day, and bless and praise the Lord, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The place where Jesus lay has told us that—

> "Vain the watch, the stone, the seal!
> Christ hath burst the gates of hell."

Now let us sing unto him, and give him all the praise.

I was thinking to say to you, beloved, let us come and see the place where Jesus lay, to weep there for our sins; let us come and see the place where Jesus lay, to die there to our sins; let us come and see the place where Jesus lay, to be buried there with him; let us come and see the place where Jesus lay, to rise from that place to newness of life, and find our way through resurrection-life into the ascension-life in which we shall sit in the heavenly place, and look down upon the things of earth with joyous contempt, knowing that he hath lifted us up far above them, and made us to be partakers of brighter bliss than this earth can ever know. But I will forbear.

I have done. I would to God that all here present had some share in this. You all have a share in dying. There is a tree growing out of which your coffin will be made; or perhaps it is already cut down and seasoning against the time when it shall make you a timber-suit—the last suit that you shall ever need. There is a spot of earth that must be shovelled out for you to be laid into to fill up the vacuum. And your soul shall live: your soul shall never die. Let not those who tell you of annihilation be believed for a moment. It must exist. Put it to yourself whether it shall be with the worm that never dieth and the fire that never shall be quenched, or with Christ who liveth in his glory, and who shall come a second time to give glory to his people and raise their bodies like his own. Oh, it will all hinge on this—"Dost thou believe in Jesus?" If thou dost, thou mayest welcome life and welcome death, and welcome resurrection, and welcome immortality. But if thou believest not, then a blast has come upon thee, and to thee it is terrible to die. It is terrible even to live; more terrible to die; it will be terrible to rise again; it will be terrible to be damned, and that for ever! God save thee from it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LIFE, WALK, AND TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly."—Genesis xvii. 1, 2.

BELOVED, all Scripture is the word of God, but some Scripture is expressly so. Much of its teaching comes through inspired men, but some of it was spoken by God's own mouth, directly and without instrumentality: such are the words now before us which were of old spoken into Abram's ear by the Almighty God. These sentences ought for this reason to be regarded with peculiar reverence, and considered with double attention. The glow of Divinity is fresh upon the lines, bend then your souls to the understanding of them. If a letter were written to you when you were far from home, you would value every line of it if your fond mother had asked a friend to write it in her name, and had dictated the expressions which he should employ; but if there were inserted in the body of the letter several sentences with this preface, "and your mother expressly says"—then you would treasure up the exact words, and repeat them to yourself again and again; would you not? All God's words in Scripture are pearls, but this is one of the fairest of them. They are all diamonds, but such words as God speaks from his own mouth I may call the Koh-i-noors of Scripture.

Look, then, at the text. We will read it again: "When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." Happy was Abram to have such intimate intercourse with God! These sacred visitations were the grand events of his life; but we need not envy him, for God has appeared unto us in a yet more glorious manner, and the appearance is abiding. Behold, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ the tabernacle of God is among men, and he doth dwell among them; and, in the indwelling of the

Holy Ghost, the believer has obtained an intimacy with God, which none of the older dispensation attained unto. The Lord was to the former saints as a wayfaring man who tarried but for a night; but it is our privilege to pray, "Abide with us," and our joy to know that wherever two or three are met together in the name of our Lord, he is there, and will manifest himself unto them. Permit me, therefore, to encourage you to pray that the words of the Lord to Abram may be words for you, pressed home upon your own spirit, and sounded in your souls with power, as from the lips of the Lord himself. Then shall our meditations be sweet indeed, and we shall be blessed with faithful Abraham. O, Spirit Divine, make it so we entreat thee!

I. The first thing we shall speak about, upon this occasion, is SURE RELIANCE. The foundation of it is laid before us in the text. True confidence leans alone upon God, who declares himself to be Almighty God, or God All-sufficient—for such is an equally correct rendering of the passage.

All true faith hangs upon God, as the vessel upon the nail. Strong faith realises the all-sufficiency of God, and that is the secret of its strength, the hidden manna on which it feeds and becomes vigorous. The Lord is all-sufficient in power to accomplish his own purposes, all-sufficient in wisdom to find his own way through difficulties which to us may appear to be like a maze, but which to him are plain enough; and he is all-sufficient in love, so that he will never fail us for want of mercy in his heart, or pity in his bosom. God is God All-sufficient; simple as that truth is for us to speak, and for you to hear, it is a deep unfathomable, and did we really grasp its truth and dwell upon it, it would have a very wonderful effect upon our whole conduct.

Remember, that Abram was ninety years old and nine, and as yet had no child by his wife Sarah; yet he had received a promise from God that there should be a seed which should spring out of his loins. He was long past the natural term of life in which it was likely that he would be the father of a son. So, also, was it with his wife Sarah. Abram, for a while overcome by unbelief, thought it best to take to himself, at the suggestion of his wife Sarah, her handmaid Hagar; and now, for some few years, Abram had possessed a son named Ishmael, and it is probable that he thought that this son would answer to God's promise, and that somehow or other the blessing would come through him. But the Lord had not so determined. He took no pleasure in the carnal policy which led to Ishmael's birth. The Lord meant the language before us to be a gentle but unmistakable rebuke for him, for he said in effect, "I am God All-sufficient—quite sufficient to fulfil my own purposes without Abram's help—quite able to achieve my own designs without such a questionable expedient as that of Hagar and her son Ishmael." That is, no doubt, the divine intent in the declaration of all-sufficiency. Hear ye, then, these words if ye also have been at any time distrustful, and let them sink into your souls,—"I am God All-sufficient." If any of you are tempted at this time to do what is questionable, because you cannot see how God's promise to you will be effected without it, the Lord tells you he wants no help of yours to achieve his own designs. "I am God Almighty," saith he; "Is anything too hard for me? Dost thou think I need thy wisdom to set me

right, or thy puny arm to strengthen me? Do I want thy help to achieve my purposes, which stand fast as my eternal throne?" It was a tender rebuke of Abram's very gross mistake, and it is to us a hint that we are never to put forth our hand unto iniquity, or to do anything that is doubtful in any form or shape, under the notion that we are thus effecting the purposes of God. Look at Rebekah. She little understood the all-sufficiency of God. God had promised her that Jacob should have the covenant-blessing, but she seems to think that God cannot keep his word and cause Jacob to inherit the promises unless she has a finger in it. Father Isaac has sent out Esau a-hunting, to bring home savoury meat, and has promised that he will give him the blessing when he returns. And now Rebekah thinks God will be defeated, the anxious mother imagines the Most High to be in a dilemma, and his purposes to be likely to fail unless her inherited craftiness can devise a stratagem to eke out the divine wisdom. Rebekah must tell lies, and Jacob must tell lies too; and poor old Isaac must be deceived, or else God's purposes will not be accomplished. O foolish Rebekah! Ere we speak thus, and condemn that gracious woman, let us make sure that we confess and condemn the same tendency in ourselves. Have we not also dreamed that we might do evil that good might come? Have we not followed policy where we ought to have sternly adhered to principle, and all this because we thought it necessary, and feared that otherwise evil would triumph? Has not our judgment been bewildered by strange providences, and been led to sanction irregular procedures, or at least to think less severely of them? Under the influence of blind unbelief, have we not been ready, like Uzzah, to lay our hand upon the ark of the Lord to steady it, for fear it should fall, as if God's ark could not take care of itself without our sinful hand being laid thereon? That lesson learned by Israel at the Red Sea is still a hard one to us: we cannot stand still and see the salvation of God. Because we do not believe in the Almighty God we are eager to make haste, we hurry, worry, fret, fuss and sin! Fear drives us, and self-sufficiency draws us, and the noble quietude of faith in God is lost. O could we but rest in omnipotent love, could we but know the Lord, and wait patiently for him, how much sin and sorrow we should be spared!

> "With feeble light and half obscure,
> Poor mortals Thy arrangements view;
> Not knowing that the least are sure,
> And the mysterious just and true.
>
> My favour'd soul shall meekly learn
> To lay her reason at Thy throne;
> Too weak Thy secrets to discern,
> I'll trust Thee for my guide alone."

Here is the fit place to set in contrast the conduct of David. He knew that in God's decree it was ordained that he should be king over Israel, yet he took no means to secure the crown. He would not lift his hand to smite Saul, nay, he spared him when he was entirely in his power. He did not unbelievingly interfere to make a providence for himself, but left the course of events in the Lord's hands; and, in consequence, when he came to the throne he had an easy conscience and no

innocent blood upon his hands. May our faith teach us the same patient waiting, and confident repose of soul. May we believe, to see the glory of the Lord. The Lord All-sufficient will in the end clear the darkest providences from all question, and our souls shall know how happy are those who put their trust in the Lord alone.

This blessed text, "I am God All-sufficient," may apply to us in times when we are inclined to shirk any service for God. Have you never felt on certain seasons that God's choice of you for a special labour could not be a wise one, for you were so unfit for it? Have you never felt in your own hearts—"I cannot do that; I think the Lord would have me do it, but I cannot. I have not the qualification. I believe I am called to it, but it is too difficult for me. I shall not be able to achieve it"? Have you never had the disposition, like Jonah, to flee to Tarshish, or somewhere else, and to escape from Nineveh and its trials? Have you never pleaded, like Jeremiah, "But I am a child?" Have you never cried, like Moses, "I am slow of speech, send by whomsoever thou wilt send, but not by me"? Now, at such a time the Lord may well remind us, "I am God All-sufficient, cannot I strengthen thee? Weak as thou art, cannot I make thee strong? Worm of the dust, cannot I make thee thresh the mountains? Why dost thou fear? Thou art feeble, but I am not. Thou art foolish, but I am wise. Give thyself up to my guidance; trust thyself in my hands, and thou shalt achieve marvels; and exceeding great wonders shalt thou accomplish by my power and grace." It will be sadly sinful if we arrogate to ourselves the right to arrange our own place, and alter heaven's appointments. We are not where we are by chance, or by a freak of fate: as God's servants, our work is allotted us wisely and authoritatively. Dare we be wiser than the Lord? Are we also of Jehovah's council? His choice of instruments is wise, even when he chooses the weak things of the world to work his purposes. Their insufficiency is of no consequence, for their sufficiency is of God. For them to attempt to shun their duty because of conscious feebleness, would be a daring sin against the prerogatives of the King of kings, an impious censure upon the infallible appointments of Infinite wisdom. May not this be a word in season to some brother or sister here, who may happen to be under that temptation? If it be, may the Lord speak it home by his Spirit, and a blessing will come of it! Work on, dear friend, and wait on, for it is no business of yours to correct your Maker's arrangements. He who placed you where you now are, knew what he was at. Look at your infirmities with another eye. No longer allow them to distress you; but the rather glory in them because they afford room and space for the divine power to rest in you and work by you. Listen no more to the wailings of your trembling flesh, which cries, "Alas, I am weak," but hear the voice of him who saith "I am God Almighty."

This word may also be useful to those who are trembling under some present temporal trial and affliction. They are dreading what may yet happen. Forebodings of what may soon come are upon them. Sometimes we have before us a gloomy prospect: we know the trial must come; we are afraid of it; and though we have the promise, "In six troubles I will be with thee, and in seven there shall no evil touch thee," yet we stand trembling. "I am God All-sufficient"—will not

that brace your nerves and enable you to press on, though it were through a valley as dark as death-shade itself? Is it poverty? God is All-sufficient to supply your needs. Is it physical pain?—and some of us dread that beyond anything else,—the All-sufficient God can put under your aching head such a peace-creating pillow, that in the sweetness of celestial love you shall forget the smarts of the flesh, and your soul shall be comforted when your body is full of agony. Why, what is it that thou fearest, O child of God? There can be no lack which he cannot supply, no enemy that he cannot subdue. Slander's cruel tooth, doth that dismay thee! Is not the Lord sufficient for this also? "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Hast thou not his own word for it? "Every tongue that rises against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Hath not he declared it? and doth not he know how to accomplish his own purpose? Therefore, again, I say, cast thy doubts and thy fears to the wind, for God as surely says to thee, O trembling believer, as ever he did to his servant Abram, "I am God, Almighty God." O rest in the Lord, and be not troubled. He shall, he must appear: only put not forth thine hand unto iniquity, and do nothing before the time. Thou hast no feeble Deity to trust in; be not a coward, but play the man.

The same may also be applied to each of us when we are under spiritual depressions. Inward tribulations are frequently more severe than temporal trials; the man of God knows this full well. We look within, and we see grace to be at a low ebb with us—at least we think so; our corruptions and our natural depravity—these we see clearly enough, and we are troubled with the sight. Neglects of duty, omissions of devotion, forgotten opportunities of usefulness, all come up and accuse us; and then we are ready to doubt whether we ever knew the Lord at all: and, perhaps, Satan at the same time assails us, and we fall under his foot for awhile. O, let us not, even in such terrible times, ever doubt our God, for he is All-sufficient still! If our salvation depended upon ourselves, it would soon be all over with us; but if it depend upon that arm, the sinews of which can never break,—if it depend upon that heart which can never change and never cease to beat with love omnipotent, why should we be discouraged? "I am God Almighty," saith the Lord: "Therefore say thou unto the enemy, 'Rejoice not over me, for though I fall yet shall I rise again.'" And suppose, beloved, you should have temporal troubles and spiritual distresses at the same time? This meeting of two seas is very apt to make the mariner expect immediate shipwreck; but, behold, walking on the waters comes thy God to thee, and saying, "I am God All-sufficient even for thee." Was there ever a storm that was not of his brewing? Therefore cannot he control it? Was there ever spirit that came up out of the deeps of hell that was not of his loosing?—and can he not hold him in as with a chain and restrain his malignant power? Behold, Jehovah rides upon the wings of the wind, and the storm-cloud is his car, fear not therefore the rattling of the wheels on which thy heavenly Father rides. In the midst of the tempest he reigns supreme, fear not the darkness which is his canopy, or the lightning which is but the glance of his eye. Trust thou him at all times, and let no fear cast thee down or hurry thee into an unbelieving and restless course of action, which would defile thee and bring

dishonour upon his blessed name. Yea, if there are signs about thee of approaching departure,—if thy body, weakened by long disease, be like a house that is ready to fall about the tenant's ears, yet God, who is all-sufficient here, will be all-sufficient on yonder dying bed. He who has been almighty in life will be almighty in death. Fear not that solemn flight through tracks unknown, or the awful appearance at the eternal throne. The God of grace is all-sufficient for all the mysteries of eternity; all-sufficient for the thunders of judgment, the terrors of vengeance, and the dread of hell. Fear not the crash of worlds, when he shall bid them all dissolve; the ever-living Redeemer, able to save unto the uttermost, is all-sufficient to support thy spirit—when all created things shall pass away and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. There exists not a conceivable ground of fear to the man who puts his trust in God Almighty! O beloved, set this as a seal upon thine arm to strengthen thee, and roll it as a stone upon the sepulchre of thy doubts. Never let them rise again. Didst thou trust a puny man, thou mightest doubt; but resting upon God, how canst thou be disquieted? Didst thou rely upon changing humanity,—didst thou place thy confidence in a creature that might love to-day and hate to-morrow, then, indeed, wert thou unhappy; but his love is everlasting and his power endureth for ever; why, then, art thou cast down? Thou hast built thy soul's hope upon the immoveable rock of All-sufficiency, and thou shalt prove the truth of that inspired assurance. "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him and honour him." Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: and cease thou from man whose breath is in his nostrils; then shall thy light shine forth as the morning, and a dew from heaven shall cause thee to bud and blossom with joy and rejoicing. Be glad in the Lord ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart, for unto you hath he spoken, and given this for the rock of your confidence,—"I am the Almighty God."

II. Secondly, our text goes on to speak of OUR RIGHT POSITION. The Lord says, "I am Almighty God," and then he adds, "Walk before me." It is much easier for me to talk about this than it will be to practise it. The meaning is simple—the actual obedience grace alone can work in us. Come, gracious Spirit, and teach us to walk before the Lord in the land of the living. God is an All-sufficient God: then, believer, never go away from him, but abide in him evermore. There is a sense in which we always do walk before God, for "in him we live, and move, and have our being;" and he sees us altogether. But that is not what is intended here. It means this: Abide, O believer, in a constant sense of God's presence. "Walk before me, the All-sufficient God." Do not wander into paths wherein you will be made to feel, "I have left my God." Have thy friend at hand:

> "Be thou my heart still near my God,
> And thou my God still near my heart."

Remember, he is a very present help in time of trouble; and do thou strive to realise this as a daily fact. Thou hast not to send for thy

God on an emergency, but thou art to walk before thy God believing him to be always near thee. Hagar once felt the power of that word, "Thou God seest me," but believers ought to feel it every moment. "Seeing him who is invisible" is not a thing for now and then, but an hourly exercise. It should be the general tenor of the believer's life to live always under the great Father's inspection. A poet puts it—"live ever under the great task-master's eye;" but I confess I do not like the word task-master. To live always as under my Father's eye has all the force of the poet's line, but has much more of sweetness. He is near me whether I journey or abide at home, whether I sorrow or rejoice. If I wake, his eyes pour sunlight on my face; if I sleep, he draws the curtains, and his presence shades me from all ill; if I rest, I sit at his feet in contemplation; if I labour, I work in his vineyard in his name, and for his sake, expecting a gracious reward from him.

"*Walk* before me." Not merely "think before me," and "pray before me," but "*walk* before me." I know many find it easy to cultivate a sense of God's presence in their own study, or in the room where they are accustomed to pray, but this is the point—to feel it in business, and in the details of every-day life. God's eye is upon me when I am weighing out or measuring the goods, when I am engrossed with transactions with my fellow merchants, or when I, as a servant, am sweeping up the hearth or minding the household duties. This you should distinctly recognise and act upon. You are to live in the little things of life, knowing that God is always with you, and always looking at you—doing your work just as will please him. Oh, how we smart ourselves up if there is somebody calling to see us. How we adjust our dress in the presence of those whom we admire. I have sometimes thought I have seen working men proceeding very slowly indeed at their tasks when alone, but when the master comes by they quicken their pace wonderfully. That is all wrong. It is eye-service, the custom of a man-pleaser, but not the habit of one who would please the Lord. We should feel, "God is always looking at me." There is many a word we should not say if we remembered that he would hear it, and many an act we dare not do if we remembered that he would register it. Yes, there is the believer's true place,— my God is God Almighty, and I am always in his presence. A person might do fifty things in a certain place, which he would not think of doing if he were at court and had just presented a petition to the queen; there is a decorousness of manner which we all observe when we are in such conditions; and, therefore, the reasoning is cogent when I ask you before the King of kings what manner of persons ought we to be! We are always in Jehovah's courts, and under his royal gaze: "Walk before me." Live ever as in the court, for remember, O believer, you are not like an ordinary person. If an ordinary person sins, it is only a common subject of the king, but you—why, you are a courtier, a favoured courtier! You are one that he has chosen to tread his courts. Nay, more: the Prince Imperial has espoused you to himself. You are the bride of the ever-blessed Bridegroom, the spouse of Immanuel, and there is always jealousy where there is much love. "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." Whatever he may be to others, he is very jealous of those on whom he has set his everlasting love. "Our God is a consuming fire." Walk

before a jealous God, then, with scrupulous regard to his honour and his holiness. Oh, it is a great word this—"walk before me." Its brevity is not so notable as its fulness. Surely it means realise my presence, and then, in general life and ordinary conversation, continue under a sense of it, serious, devout, holy, earnest, trustful, consecrated, Christ-like.

But he meant more than that. "Walk before me." That is, "Delight in my company." True believers find their choicest joy in communion with God; and did we always walk before God in a sense of communing with him, our peace would be like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. Would it be possible for us to feel any distress of heart if we always enjoyed the Saviour's love? Methinks there are no bitters known that would be able to affect our palate if we always had in our mouth the love of the Saviour in its ineffable, all-conquering sweetness. "Walk before me." Do not interfere with God's purposes: do not, unbelieving, try to help omnipotence and supplement omniscience, but rejoice in the Lord and find satisfaction in him only. Be filled with his fulness, and satiated with his favour. Go and do your part, which is to obey and to commune, and leave God's work to God. Walk before him, and attend to that only. Do not doubt God's power to fulfil his own decrees. Do not doubt that he will keep his word to the letter and to the minute; but do thou cultivate fellowship with God, for this will ennoble thee and help thee to give glory to his name.

"Walk before me." Does not it mean just this, in a word, "Do not act as seeing anybody else except me. Walk before me." Now, Abram had walked before Sarah: he had listened to her, and much mischief had come of his so doing at different times. The dearest friends we have are often those who will lead us most astray when we take counsel with flesh and blood. She was peculiarly qualified from her very excellence of character to influence Abram, and, in her unbelieving moods, to lead him away from the glorious absoluteness of his faith. She meant well enough, but she was too politic in her suggestion as to her handmaid. In the present case the Lord seems to say to him, "Do not suffer Sarah to affect you in these things. Walk before me." Beloved, mind you keep clear of the unbelieving advice of good people, and then you will have the less to fear from bad ones. And there was Hagar: Abram had been a great deal distressed about her, and it was but right that he should feel much interest in her welfare. And there was her son Ishmael whom he loved, and whom he would have to send, in future time, away with deep regret from the household. God says to Abram, "Do not allow your course to be shaped by regarding Hagar, or regarding Ishmael, or regarding Sarah, or anybody else. "Walk before me." I am persuaded that a regard for God, a sense of duty, a straightforward following out of convictions, is the only true style of living, for if you begin to notice the whims and wishes of one, then you will have to do the same with another; and if your course of conduct is to be shaped to please men, you will become man's slave and nothing better; and no child of God ought to come into that condition. If I felt I came into this pulpit to please any of you, I should feel mean, utterly mean, and unfit to preach to you; and you would soon know it and find out that God was not blessing me to your souls. And if any

of you, in your course of business, are always trying to catch the eye of this person, or cringing and fawning to this other nobleman, or squire, or gentleman, why, you are mean too. But the man who says, "I do the right in God's sight: I have not swerved from a sense of conscious rectitude, as before the living God,"—why, sir, you have got all the freedom of soul that you can desire this side heaven. To walk before *God*, that is the point; to fear the Lord, and no one else, that is the state of mind to aim at. Make this the master passion of your soul, "For me to live is Christ"; make the honour of God your chief motive, and the law of God your rule. Walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

III. But we must pass on, for there is another point, and that is, as we have considered our sure reliance and our right position, we notice next OUR GLORIOUS AIM: "Be thou perfect."

Now, the connection shows us that the only way to be perfect is to walk before the Lord. If any man desires holiness, he must get it through communion. The way to be transformed into the likeness of God is to live in the company of God. That which thou lookest upon, thou wilt soon be like; and if thine eyes look on God, thy character will become like God. Hence the order of our text is highly suggestive, and should be earnestly noted and practically carried out. First, God must be known as All-sufficient; thus he helps and enables his servant to walk before him, and then, as a consequence, that favoured servant labours to obey the word of command, "BE THOU PERFECT." There could be no walking before the Lord if all-sufficient grace did not work it in us, and the command, "Be thou perfect," would be mere mockery if Almighty love did not stand engaged to work all our works in us. To a man who has learned to rest in Almighty faithfulness, the perfect law is delightful; and with confidence in the energy of the Holy Spirit he is not staggered by its commands. I desire you to note this, for the order of Holy Scripture is always full of reason and weight. Whatever ill-taught divines may do, the Holy Spirit never puts the fruit before the root, and never places the pinnacle where the foundation should be. Begin with God's All-sufficiency, go on to the holy fellowship and obedience, and then aim at scriptural perfection, and so you will take everything in due sequence.

But we must pass on. As you are aware, our margin reads the text thus, "Be thou *sincere*," or "Be thou *upright*;" and either translation would not be incorrect. Now, child of God, you have been saying, "I do not see how God is to fulfil his promise to me." What have you to do with that? Walk before God, and be you sincere. He will attend to the due performance of all that he has promised. Remember—

> "Though dark be your way, since he is your guide,
> 'Tis yours to obey, 'tis his to provide."

In all things be transparently sincere, never pray a formalistic prayer, or sing a heartless hymn, or prattle out experience you never felt. Shun first and foremost the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Be what you would seem to be. Be down-right; intensely real, thorough, and if you are that, you shall never find God less thorough than you are, nor the Lord less true to his word than you shall be. If you are wavering and doubleminded, you must not expect anything of the Lord,

but if you are single-hearted he will abundantly reward you. Mind this, I pray you, every day you live. This is the age of plausible sham, the era of superficiality; therefore be unmistakably true before the God of truth. The margin translates the passage by the word "upright;" and it comes to just this. You are fretting about how the Lord will deal with you. Brother, that is no concern of thine. Thy concern is that thou be upright in business. "My trade falls off," says one. Be upright, brother: whatever you do, be upright. "But I have drifted into such difficulties, I am afraid I shall be ruined." Be upright, brother, whatever you do, be upright. "Could not I get away a few of my goods, for instance, which ought to be my creditors'?" Brother, be upright; be upright. "Ah, but then, surely, I shall hardly have a rag left." Be upright, brother, be upright. "Oh, but I consider my children." "Walk before me," says the Lord, "and be thou upright." "Oh, but a man must take care of himself and his family." Be upright, brother; that is the main thing to take care about. It will not matter how poor you are, if you do not lose your character. Lose everything else and you may yet be happy; but if you lose your peace of mind who can comfort you? If the worldling can point at you and say, "There is a professor who wronged his creditors," that will be worse than all. No court is so much to be dreaded as the court of conscience—keep all things clear there. Better an honest pauper than a rich rogue. I am sure your fellow Christians will respect you none the less, however low you come, if you come there fairly; all those whose love is worth the having will cling to you in hearty sympathy, and only false friends, the parasites of the hour, will desert you, and a good riddance will their departure turn out to be. But avoid, I implore you, those tricks so common among traders now-a-days—those rash speculations, those deceptive accommodations, the lying and duping of others, which men fly to as a drowning man catches at a straw—a straw that he ought never to touch. Not losing, but cheating is the mischief; and the Lord says to you, "I am God All-sufficient: I can take care of you: I can bring you through all this; but do not touch forbidden things in order to escape from trial, or your trials will multiply and crush you. Walk before me, as under my eye; and be thou upright."

But our version says, "Be thou perfect," and for my part, I like it as it stands: "Be thou perfect." "Oh," says one, "but how can we be perfect?" I will ask thee another question: Wouldst thou have God command thee to be less than perfect? If so, he would be the author of an imperfect law. "The law of the Lord is perfect;" how could it be otherwise? I do not find that he bids us partly keep his law, but wholly keep it. And so the Lord holds up this as the standard of a Christian, "Be thou perfect."

And does it not mean, let us be perfect in desiring to have all the round of graces? Suppose a man should have faith, and should have love, but no hope: he would not be perfect. He would be like a child that had two arms, but only one foot; it would not be a perfect child. You must have all the graces, if you are to be a perfect man. I think I have known some Christians who have had all the graces except patience, but they never could be patient. "Walk before me," saith the

Lord, "and be thou perfect in patience." I have known some others who seemed to have almost every grace except the grace of forgiveness; they could not very readily forget any injury that had been done to them. Dear brother, you must get that grace, the grace of forgiveness, and walk before the Lord with that, or you will remain a mutilated character. A Christian's character is spoilt by the omission of any one virtue. And you must labour in the presence of God to have all these things, that they be in you and abound. Be ye in this sense perfect.

And as we have all the graces, so we should seek to have in our lives exhibited all the virtues, in the fulfilment of all our duties. It is a very sad thing when you hear of a Christian man that he is a very excellent deacon, that he is a very admirable local preacher or Sabbath-school teacher, but that he is a very unkind father. That "but" spoils it all. A saint abroad is no saint if he be a devil at home. We have known men of whom it has been said that out of doors they were all that could be desired, *but* they were bad husbands. That "but,"—how it mars the tale. It is the dead fly which has got into a very good pot of ointment, and made the whole of it stink. Keep the dead flies out, brethren. By God's grace may your character be full-orbed! May God grant you grace to be at home and to be abroad, to be in the shop and in the chamber, and to be in every department of life, just that which a man should be who walks before the All-sufficient God.

Now, I think I hear somebody saying, "How shall we ever reach such a height?" My dear brother, you never will do so except you remember the first part of the text—"I am the Almighty God." He can help you. If there be any sin that you cannot overcome yourself, he can overcome it for you. If there be any virtue you have not yet reached, he can lead you up to it. Never despair of the highest degree of grace. What the best of men have been, you also may be. There is no reason why you should not yet be elevated beyond all the sin into which you may have fallen from inadvertence or temptation. Have hope, my brother; have hope for a higher platform of character. Have hope yet to be conformed unto the image of God's dear Son. Aim at nothing less than perfection.

But I will not detain you longer, except to notice that last word. It is a very sweet word: "I will make my covenant between me and thee." How run the words? "I will make my covenant between me and thee."

Oh, it is the man that knows an All-sufficient God, and that lives in the presence of God, and that endeavours to be perfect in his life—it is that man that enjoys intercourse and communion with God, such as no one else knows, for "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." "There shall be a covenant between me and thee." It sounds so sweetly to me—as if he had said, "I will say nothing to the outside world; neither wilt thou tell them. It shall be with thee and me. We will strike hands together. Abram, thou shalt be my friend, and I will be thy friend for ever. Thou wilt say, 'My Father,' and I will say 'My son.' Thou wilt put thyself into my hand, and I will carry thee therein. Thou wilt ask to see my glory, and I will make my glory pass before thee. I will tell thee what I mean to do. If I am going to destroy Sodom, I will come and tell Abram my friend. I will let thee speak to me, and I will hear thee. Time after time I will stay

whilst thou dost plead for fifty, and for forty-five, and thirty, and twenty, and ten. 'There shall be a covenant between me and thee.' And *I* will make it. It shall not be such a one as thy timorous faith would make. I will make it after the manner of my bounty, my eternity, and my all-sufficiency." When the Lord makes a covenant, it it will stand; it will be sure; it will be rich; it will be full. And, O, I pray that every one of you may know that covenant and live upon its incomparable blessings. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," and he will show them his covenant. But many a child of God walks frowardly, and the Lord will not fully reveal the covenant to such. Some of his Peters follow afar off, and they get into trouble; but they do not enjoy the sweets of divine fellowship and peculiar manifestation. But this careful walking, this close walking, this keeping near to an All-sufficient God, this resting solely in him—Oh, this it is that brings the sweetness and the joy which are the antepast of heaven—which are, indeed, a young heaven begun this side the tomb. The Lord bring my dear friends all into holy fellowship with God; and if any of you have not come to the border of the happy land, I pray you may be led there at once. The way of salvation is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Faith is both the road to the highest happiness, and the way to the first safety—faith is both the the highest round of the ladder, and its first step—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Have done with the self-righteous working, and come to the trusting. Have done with seeking to save self, and accept Jeseus alone as your Redeemer.

The Lord grant you grace so to do; and his shall be the praise for ever and ever! Amen.

A NEW WORK FOR FAMILIES.

To my Sermon Readers. *Nov. 21st*, 1872.

Beloved Friends,—Many persons have requested that the expositions, or running comments, which I am accustomed to give in the pulpit, might be printed. With this request I have never seen it expedient to comply, but now an opportunity occurs for giving to my friends something very similar.

I am much impressed with the value of family devotion as a means of maintaining a testimony for God in the household, and a method of instruction for the young; but I fear that much of family worship is uninteresting and unprofitable, because the Scriptures are read as a mere duty and are not understood. To help a little towards making the reading of the Bible in the family more useful, I have prepared a series of selected passages for every day of the year, and have added a few short comments where I thought they might be serviceable. The series will contain the general run of the Scripture history, with the more spiritual passages interwoven, and my hope is that young people will obtain an idea of the Scriptures as a whole by perusing the appointed portions. Hymns are added, but no prayers, for I cannot make it square with my conscience to prepare forms of prayer for others while I refuse to use them myself.

I have studied brevity, and made the portions of such a length that they will not protract unduly the moments devoted to the household worship. Two readings are given for each day, but they are so arranged that families which only meet once in the day can complete the work in two years. The book is entitled, "The Interpreter," by C. H. Spurgeon.

In order to bring the work within the reach of all, it will be issued monthly in parts, at one shilling, beginning with January, 1873, and will be complete in twenty-one parts, or perhaps in twenty. Orders will be received by any bookseller, or the work can be had post free for twelve stamps per number, of the publishers, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, 4, Paternoster-buildings.

My hope is that much good may come of this laborious effort, which I have undertaken amid many toils, and so far carried on with much hopefulness.

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LIVING TEMPLES FOR THE LIVING GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word."—Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2.

THAT is an excellent answer which was given by a poor man to a sceptic who attempted to ridicule his faith. The scoffer said, "Pray sir, is your God a great God or a little God?" The poor man replied, "Sir, my God is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; and yet he condescends to be so little, that he dwells in broken and contrite hearts." Oh, the greatness of God, and the condescension of God! I hope we shall be led to think of both this evening, while we meditate upon the words of the text.

We have no time nor need of a preface. The text first of all teaches us that God rejects all material temples as the places of his abode; but, secondly, it informs us that God has made a choice of spiritual temples, wherein he will dwell.

I. First of all, then, let us think a little of GOD'S REJECTION OF ALL MATERIAL TEMPLES. There was a time, when it could be said that there was a house of God on earth. That was a time of symbols, when as yet the Church of God was in her childhood. She was being taught her A B C, reading her picture-book, for she could not as yet read the word of God, as it were, in letters. She had need to have pictures put before her, patterns of the heavenly things. Then, even then, the enlightened amongst the Jews knew right well that God did not dwell between curtains, and that it was not possible that he could be encompassed in the most holy place within the veil. It was only a symbol of

his presence. The fiery cloudy pillar was merely an indication that he was there, in that Tabernacle where he was pleased to say that he peculiarly revealed himself. But the time of symbols is now passed altogether. In that moment when the Saviour bowed his head, and said, "It is finished!" the veil of the temple was rent in twain, so that the mysteries were laid open. The most august of types I might consider the veil of the temple to be, but the dying hands of the Saviour grasped that veil, and tore it in twain from top to bottom; and then the secrets within, which were all the more secret because they were symbols, were made bare to the gazer's eye, and no longer did God deign to have a place on earth that should be called his house, nor any symbols of his presence whatsoever among the sons of men; and now it is sheer legality, a defunct ceremonial, Judaism, carnality, and idolatry, to go about and say of this place, "This is the house of God," or of such a chapel, or such a stone erection, "This is the altar of God," or of any man who chooses to put on certain tagrags and ribbons, "This is a man of God," a priest of the Most High! This is all done away with, and put away for ever. Now, as the church has attained her maturity, she lays aside these childish things. Those orders of divine service which were symbols and nothing more, having answered their ends, are abolished and superseded, and God pours contempt upon the superstitious veneration of their relics. By the mouth of his servant Paul, in the Hebrews, he bids us look not to the shadows but to the substances, not to the symbols but to the great realities. So, brethren, one reason why God saith he dwelleth not in temples made with hands, is, because he would have us know that the symbolical worship is ended and the reign of the spiritual worship inaugurated at this day. As our Lord said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

But our text gives, from God's own mouth, reasons why there can be no house at the present time in which God can dwell; and, indeed, there never was any house of the kind in reality—only in symbol. For, say now, where is the place to build God a house? Look ye abroad, ye ambitious architects that would erect for God a house! Where will ye place it? Will ye place it in heaven? It is only his throne, not his house! Even all the majesty of heaven is but the seat on which he sits. Where will ye place the house then? On his seat? Build a temple on his throne! It cannot be. Do you say you will erect it here, on earth? What, on his footstool? This whole globe is but his footstool! Will ye put it where he shall put his foot upon it and crush it? A house for God upon his footstool! The very notion contradicts itself, and men may for ever

forego the idea of building a house where God shall dwell, or a place where he shall rest. Fly through infinite space, and ye shall not find in any place that God is not there. Time cannot contain him, though it range along its millenniums! Space cannot hold him, for he that made all things is greater than the all things that he has made! Yea, all the things that are, do not encompass him. He is without bound or measure, beyond all that he has already made; though the astronomers tell us that so grand is the scale of the visible universe, the scenes opened up by the telescope suffice to baffle the imagination, and overwhelm the reason. All that God has made, is but the drop of a bucket compared with what he could make. Though it might take us endless ages to enumerate the worlds he has created, one single breathing from his lips could create ten thousand times as many, for he is the infinite God. Who then shall imagine, that in heaven, which is his throne, or on earth, which is his footstool, a house shall be built for him?

But then, the Lord seems to put it,—What kind of a house (supposing we had a site on which to erect it) would we build for God? Sons of men, of what material would ye make a dwelling-place for the Eternal and the Pure? Would ye build of alabaster? The heavens are not clean in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly! Would ye build of gold? Behold, the streets of his metropolitan city are paved therewith, not indeed the dusky gold of earth, but transparent gold, like unto clear glass. And what were gold to Deity? Men may crave it and adore it, but what careth he for it? Whereas that city, wherein the church shall dwell for ever, hath foundations of chrysolyte and sapphire and jasper and all manner of precious stones, will you think to rival that? Ah, your wealth can never equal such costliness, though all the royal treasuries were at your disposal. Find diamonds, as massive as the stones whereof Solomon built his house on Zion, and then lay on rubies and jaspers,—pile up a house, all of which shall be most precious. What were that to him? God is a Spirit. He disdaineth your materialism. How can ye encompass the infinite mind within your walls, for they are tangible substance at the very best. And yet men think, forsooth, when they have put up their Gothic or their Grecian structures, "This is God's house." Take me to imperial Russia, and point me to the meanest hovel of the meanest serf; tell me it is the imperial palace—I might believe it possible; but take me to the most gorgeous pile that human skill has ever reared, and tell me that is God's house!—Impossible! I hold up a snail's shell, and say, "This is as much the angel Gabriel's house as that is the house of the living God." They know not what they speak. Brainless are they, or they would not think so of him who filleth all things!

And then the Lord shows that the earth and the heavens themselves, which may be compared to a temple, are the works of his hand. How

often I have felt as if I were compassed with the solemn grandeur of a temple, in the midst of the pine forest, or on the heathery hill, or out at night with the bright stars looking down through the deep heavens, or listening to the thunder, peal on peal, or gazing at the lightning as it lit up the sky! Then one feels as if he were in the temple of God! Afar out on the blue sea, where the ship is rocking up and down on the waves' foam—then it seems as if you were somewhere near to God,—amidst the sublimities of nature. But what then? All these objects of nature he has made, and they are not a house for him. He spake, and they were created. "Earth be," said he, and up sprang the round globe in all her comeliness. He had but to say it, and she was decked in her green mantle. He had but to speak it, and sun and moon shone forth in all their glories. Who then shall think of building a house for God, when even the heavens are but his throne and the earth is but his footstool? The notion, brethren, that there are some places peculiarly sacred will, however, cling to people's minds; even those who call themselves Christians are prone thereto; yet it is a most wicked notion, I verily believe, and full of mischief. I am sometimes up on the Alps amidst the glories of nature, with the glacier and snow-clad peak; I am in the open, and I breathe the fresh air that comes from the ancient hills, but you tell me that there I am on "unholy ground"! Stands there, hard by, a little place, painted in all gaudy colours, in honour of a woman—blessed among women—it is true. I step inside, look round, and behold, the place is full of dolls and toys! Am I to be told that this is God's house inside and that outside thereof it is not God's house? It seems monstrous! How can any rational man credit it? Look into a little shell, full of "holy water." Go outside,—and see the foaming waters sparkling in the cascade or coming down from the clouds, and they say "There is no holiness in that"! It's a wicked notion—wicked, I say—to think that your four walls make that place holy, and your incantations, and I know not what, consecrate it. But, where God is, outside there, with the storm and the thunder, the rain and wind, it is not holy. Oh, sirs, I think the outside is the holier of the two! For my part, I can worship best there, and love God, and think of him as being nearer to him there, than I can within. The superstitious notion which makes people think that if they go at particular times to these places, and go through certain actions, they have done service to God, leads them to forget, if not altogether to disclaim, God at ordinary times, and in common circumstances. Their God is a local God, and his worship is local. So we see men, when they have gone through the ritual, go back to revel in their vanities, and to repeat their sins. A change of heart they do not care about: they were regenerated in baptism. To be taught the way of God more perfectly—what does that matter? Were they not confirmed? To live upon Christ and

feed upon his flesh and blood in spirit and in truth—that is nothing. They have had the bread and wine at the Communion: will not that suffice? The whole thing generates formalism, and eats out the soul of true piety. Howbeit, the religion of Jesus teaches me that I am always to worship; that family prayer is as good and as much accepted as the prayer in the great congregation; that I may pray in private; that every hour, and not merely at some canonical hour, I ought to pray; that

> "Where'er I seek him he is found,
> And every place is hallowed ground;"

that the Lord will bless and accept me, and press me to his heart as his own dear child, wherever I am; for in my Father's house are many mansions, and God's grace is not here or there, but everywhere that the true heart seeks it. I want you all to feel this, because somehow or other, the Church does not appear to learn it. God was with the Covenanters amidst their glens, as gloriously as ever he manifested himself in cathedrals. God has been as earnestly sought, and as verily found in humble cottages where two or three have met to pray, as ever he has been in the largest tabernacle. The sailor's service read on the sea has been as acceptable to God as worship on land; and the gatherings of humble Romans in the Catacombs, or of the hunted fathers in the secluded dells of our counties, were as much the gatherings of the true Church of God as any well-appointed assemblies can be in these peaceable times. Thus saith the Lord, "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" Let us shake ourselves clear of all the idolatry and materialism that is so common in the age.

II. Now, secondly, let us muse awhile upon GOD'S CHOICE OF SPIRITUAL TEMPLES. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Observe, beloved, that God chooses to dwell in men's hearts. He is a Spirit, and he takes our spirits to be the resting place of his Spirit. Will you note carefully, as respects the choice of hearts in which God would dwell, what is *not* said. It is not said, "I will dwell with men that are of elevated rank." I never find a single scripture that gives any special privileges to dignity, nobility, or royalty—nay, not a syllable throughout all scripture that gives any peculiar gospel promise to the great and the rich of this world. Indeed, "not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen." Nor do I read here anything about a peculiar office. It is not said, "To that man will I look, who is ordained and set apart, and made specially to be a vessel of grace." No, nothing of the sort—nothing about monks, or priests, or clergy, or ministers—no special class set apart for the reception of the blessing. Far otherwise.

Neither do I notice any singular genius necessary. It is not said, "With that man of poetic mind will I dwell," or, "with that person of refined spirit," or, "with the man that has an eye to the beauties of colour," or, "an ear to the harmonies of sound,"—not a word of it. Some men think that genius makes men good, and all who happen to excel are set down as the excellent of the earth. With God it is not so, and it is not said so here. Neither is it written that God will dwell with persons of any special education. It is well to be educated, but a knowledge of Latin and Greek, and Hebrew and Syriac, will not inscribe our names in the Book of Life. A man may be most illiterate, and yet come under the description here given, for there is not a syllable about the learned and highly educated being the temples of God. Neither is there a syllable here said about outward religiousness. It does not say, "I will dwell with that man that attends a place of worship twice a Sunday, joins the church, is baptized, and receives the Lord's Supper." Nothing of the sort. The description of the spiritual temple runs not so.

And then, I want you to notice next, that the points which are selected as descriptive of God's temple are just such as are frequently despised. "Oh," the world says, "who wants to be poor?" "Poor in spirit," we reply. "Ah," says the world, "we don't want any of your poor-spirited creatures: we like a man full of courage and confidence—your self-made, self-reliant men. Poor in spirit, indeed! And," says the world, "we find the contrite very dull company. Broken-hearted people are not the sort we love to associate with." Oh, no; what in their account can be the value of contrition? And as for trembling at God's word, why you know it was because the Society of Friends were accustomed to speak much of this, and say that they trembled at God's words, that they called them Quakers, thus turning their good confession into a term of derision and reproach. And now-a-days, if a man is very reverent towards the word of God, and very desirous to obey the Lord's commands in everything, people say, "He is very precise," and they shun him; or, with still more acrimony, they say, "He is very bigoted: he is not a man of liberal spirit;" and so they cast out his name as evil. Bigotry, in modern parlance, you know, means giving heed to old truths in preference to novel theories; and a liberal spirit, now-a-days, means being liberal with everything except your own money—liberal with God's law, liberal with God's doctrine, liberal to believe that a lie is a truth, that black is white, and that white may occasionally be black. That is liberal sentiment in religion—the broad church school—from which may God continually deliver us; for there is something true in the world after all, and we shall get wrong in heart and rotten at the core if we think there is not.

Now God is pleased to say that the man who trembleth at his word, the man of broken heart, the man who is poor in spirit, is such an one

as he will look to; these are his temples,—these, and these only, are the men in whom he will dwell. And I am so thankful for this, beloved friends, because this is a state which, through God's grace, is attainable by all here whom the Lord shall call. Oh, if the Lord said he dwelt in the hearts of the great, there would not be much hope for some of us; or if he said he dwelt with the refined and well-instructed, we might never have received a visit from him; but if it be with the poor, happy is it for us, as you see it is easier to grow poor than rich, and God by his grace can soon make us poor in spirit. If he dwells with the contrite, why should not I be among the contrite? And if he dwells with those that tremble at his word,—well, that is not a very high degree of grace,—surely through his love I may get to that, and God may come and dwell with me, and make me to rejoice in his company. For, beloved, these evidences which are here put down, are such as belong to the very least of the saints. If the Lord had said he dwelt with those that had full assurance, it would shut many of us out. If the Lord said he dwelt with those who had attained to the higher life, and walked habitually with him, that might shut us out again. But, oh, how condescendingly he has put it—with the poor, the contrite, and those that tremble at his word. Here is God's architecture, here is his cathedral, here are his tabernacles in which he dwells—the poor, the contrite, and the trembling heart. Let us thank God that these three marks are what they are. It is consoling to our spirits that they do not shut us out of hope. Note these three marks one by one.

God will look to the poor, that is, those who are destitute of all merit, who have no good works, who have spent the last rusty farthing of their boasted merit, who have nothing to rely upon of their own. Dear brother, are you emptied clean out of everything you could rely upon? You are the man with whom God would dwell. Devoid of all strength, as well as of all merit, do you feel, "I cannot do what I ought to do in the future any more than I did in the past." Do you feel that even your repentance must be God's gift, and faith must come from him; that you lie like a dead man at his feet; and, if saved, salvation must be all of grace from first to last? Oh, dear brother, give me thine hand, for thou art one of those in whose hearts God will dwell. And art thou emptied of all wisdom, now? Once thou didst account thyself to know everything, but now thou art willing to sit on the lowest form in God's school, to be taught as a little child everything by the great Master. Oh, what a mercy it is to be made to feel one's self a fool, an utter fool, weak, feeble, dead, hopeless, helpless, and lost! Oh, if the Lord has brought you there, dear friends, sorrowful as your condition may seem to yourself, it is full of the brightest hope, for God has said he will look to him that is poor. Now, why does God come to the poor? Why, because there is room for him there. Other hearts are full, these hearts are empty,

and God comes in. God will never come to a heart that is full of self-righteousness; or, if he comes, it will be to empty that heart, and make it poor in spirit. But when he once has made the heart empty and waste and desolate, then he comes and makes the wilderness to rejoice, and the desert to blossom as a rose. I do trust that some of you who are poor in spirit, are picking up crumbs of comfort from this precious text.

The next word is, "the contrite"—"of a contrite spirit," that is, the man that feels his sin and hates it, that mourns that he should have rebelled against God, and desires to find mercy. Now, God will come to such, because there is purity in that heart. "Oh," saith the contrite spirit, "I do not see any purity in my heart." No, but what do you see, then? "Oh, I see all manner of sin and evil, and I hate myself because it is so." There is purity in that hatred; at any rate there is a something that God loves in that hatred in your soul, of the sin that is within, and he will come to you, for there is something there that is akin to his own holiness: he has put it there. You have begun to appeal for mercy. Oh, then, God's mercy will come, for mercy delights to visit misery. Mercy is always at home where there is a sinner confessing sin.

"Mercy is welcome news indeed
To those that guilty stand;
Wretches, that feel what help they need,
Will bless the helping hand.
We all have sinn'd against our God,
Exception none can boast;
But he that feels the heaviest load
Will prize forgiveness most."

Besides, I know what will happen to you if you are of a broken spirit: you will value the society of Jesus. None love Christ so well as those that hate themselves for their sin. He that strips himself of all pretensions of his own will, admires much, and longs most passionately for, the robe of righteousness which Christ provides. Beloved, because Christ is in you as a contrite soul, and you prize him,—this is one reason why God will come and dwell in you, for he wants no better company than Christ his Son. Besides, your contrition of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit, and where the Holy Spirit is at work, there God the Father loves to be. Don't you see that your contrition comes from the Spirit, and your hope comes from the Son? Should not the Father come and dwell where his Spirit and where his Son already are? Be of good cheer, thou cast down spirit. Though every hope be broken, and all thy joy be dead, though thou be brought very low, even to the extreme of doubting and fear, yet God has said it, and he will keep his word: he will come and dwell with those that are of a contrite spirit.

The third word describes the temples yet more graphically: God will dwell with those that tremble at his word. Now the man that is in a right state for God to dwell in, trembles at God's word because he believes it to be all true. If thou doubt God's word, between God and thee there is a disagreement, a rupture, a quarrel; and God never will dwell in thy soul. The trembler believes it to be all true, and therefore he trembles. As he reads the law, he says, "Thy holy law condemns me." He trembles at the threatenings of that law, for he feels he deserves them to be fulfilled on him. And when the gospel comes, and he receives it and rejoices in it he trembles at it,—trembles at the love that looked upon him from all eternity,—trembles that he should have nailed the Saviour to the cross,—trembles lest, after all, he should not be washed in the precious blood; and he trembles after he is washed, lest he should not walk as blood-washed spirits should. These things are so high and sublime, that he trembles beneath the burden of the glory that he should receive. He trembles at the promise. "O Lord," saith he, "let that sweet promise be mine," and he trembles lest he should miss it,—trembles at a precept lest he should misunderstand it, or not carry it out in a proper spirit. He is not like some, who say of certain precepts, "These are non-essential." "No," says the man of God, "I tremble at what you call a non-essential precept." If there be an ordinance, ordained of God in scripture, and others slight it and say it is trivial, the man of God, says, "No, to me it is not trivial or unimportant. Anything that is in the word of God and has the stamp of his approval, I tremble at." Some one once said to an old Puritan, "Some have made such rents in their conscience, that you might make a little nick in yours. There is no reason why you should be so precise;" but the other replied, "I serve a precise God." The God of Israel is a jealous God, and his people know it. Moses was not permitted to enter Canaan, for such a sin that you can hardly tell what it was,—it seemed such a little one; yet was he shut out from the land of promise for it; for God is more particular with those that are near to him than with others. He is jealous with those that are at Court; and he that leans his head on his bosom must expect the great Saviour to be stricter with him than with any of those that are without. Oh, beloved, we must tremble at God's word. We know we shall enter heaven if we are believers in Jesus, but we tremble lest by any means we should mar our evidence of being inheritors of that goodly land. We know the love of God will never cast us away; we know the eternal love will never reject those it has chosen; but we tremble lest we should abuse that grace. The more gracious the doctrines we hear and believe, the more we tremble, lest we should sin against such a gracious God. We go through the world trembling and rejoicing. Now, if that is our condition, God saith he will dwell with us. Oh, there are some of you dear hearts here that could not lay hold

on this text anywhere, except on this particular point. You can say, "Oh, sir, I do tremble under God's word. How often under a sermon you make me quiver from head to foot; and, when I am reading the Bible alone, I am melted into tears with it." Dear brother, I am glad of that, I am glad of that; for a holy trembling is a sign of life. If you can quiver before the eternal majesty of God's voice, you are not altogether like the stocks and stones,—not altogether dead in trespasses and sins. See then (for I will say no more upon it) what a blessed thing it is to be of this character, that God will dwell with us.

III. I will close, lastly, with this: Those that are of this character secure A GREAT BLESSING. God says he will *look* to them. That means several things. It means consideration. Whoever and whatever God may overlook, he will look upon a broken heart. This means approbation. Though God does not approve of the most costly building that is meant to be his house, he approves of every one that trembles at his word. It means acceptance. Though God will accept no materialism in his worship, he will accept the sighs and cries of a poor broken spirit. It means affection. Be they who they may that do not receive God's help, contrite spirits shall have it. And it means benediction. "To *this* man will I look." I was reading the other day in an old author the following reflection as near as I can remember it. Saith he, "There may be a child in the family that is very weak and sickly. There are several others that are also out of health, but this one is sorely ill. And the mother says to the nurse, 'You shall see after the rest, but to this one will *I* look—even to this one that is so sore sick and so exceeding weak.'" So God does not say to his angels, "You shall look after the poor and the contrite, I have other things to do," but he saith, "Go ye about, ye spirits, be ye ministering spirits to those that are stronger, and bear *them* up in your hands, lest *they* dash themselves against a stone; but here is a poor soul that is very poor: I will look after *him* myself. Here is a poor spirit that is very broken: I will bind that up myself. Here is a heart that trembles very much at my word: I will comfort that heart myself;" and so, he that telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by name—he healeth the broken in heart; he bindeth up their wounds. Out of special love to them he will do it himself. I should like to be the means of comfort to some contrite spirit to-night. Very likely the Lord will say, "No, I will not make you the means of it." Very well, Master: be it as thou wilt; but thou wilt do it thyself. When we write books and tracts, we wish that we might comfort the desponding. Very likely the Lord will say, "No, no." What should we reply to this? "Lord, thou canst do it better than we could. There are some sores we cannot reach, some diseases that laugh at our medicines, but, good Lord, thou canst do it." And the Lord will come to you, poor broken down in heart,—he will come. Don't despair.

Though the devil says you will never be saved, don't believe it; and above all, turn your eyes full of tears to Christ on the cross, and trust him. There is salvation in no other, but there is salvation in the crucified Redeemer.

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner—look unto him, and be saved—
Unto him who was nail'd to the tree.

It is not thy tears of repentance or prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul:
On him, then, who shed it believing at once
Thy weight of iniquities roll.

His anguish of soul on the cross hast thou seen?
His cry of distress hast thou heard?
Then why, if the terrors of wrath he endured,
Should pardon to thee be deferr'd?

We are heal'd by his stripes;—wouldst thou add to the word?
And he is our righteousness made:
The best robe of heaven he bids thee put on:
Oh! couldst thou be better array'd?

Then doubt not thy welcome, since God has declared,
There remaineth no more to be done;
That once in the end of the world he appeared;
And completed the work he begun."

Look to Jesus, and rest your soul at the foot of his cross, and if you don't get life to-day, nor to-morrow, you *will* get it; and if you have not joy and peace in believing for many a day, it *will* come: it *must* come, for God will sooner or later look to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word.

Now, many will go away and laugh, and say, "Well, I understand nothing about that." Poor heart! The more's the pity! If thou livest and diest, not knowing this, thy lot will be worse than if thou hadst never been born. The Lord have mercy on thee! Though thy pocket be lined with gold, and thy back covered with the finest cloth, and thy house full of splendid furniture, and children on thy knee, God have mercy on thee if thou hast never known what a contrite spirit meaneth, for, as the Lord liveth, a terrible end will be thine—an end without end, for ever and for ever.

But, and if I speak to the poorest of the poor, who came in hither though they thought their clothes were not fit for decent company, though you have not a home to go to to-night, and though you have not any comfort of conscience by reason of sin; or, if I speak to such as have many creature comforts, but no comfort in spirit, because you are pressed down by guilt; bless the Lord here, as you listen to the

proclamation of his tender mindfulness of your low estate; for the message has come, and Jesus is come to set free the captive, to open blind eyes, and recover the lost. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." May you find salvation in him, for his love's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Isaiah lxvi.

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THE THORN IN THE FLESH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 8TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—2 Corinthians xii. 7, 8, 9.

MANY persons have a morbid desire to roll up the curtain, and gaze upon the secret lives of eminent personages. Paragraphs detailing the private habits of public men are delicacies for such minds. Books stuffed with idle gossip and the merest trash are sure of a wide circulation, if they tell how princes ate, how warriors drank, how philosophers slept, or how senators arranged their hair. For once we are able to gratify curiosity, and yet minister to edification; for we have unveiled before us a portion of the secret life of Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles. We may not only see his bed-chamber, but learn the apostle's visions; we may not only see his private infirmities, but learn the cause of them. Let us not, however, be actuated by so low a motive as mere curiosity, while we gaze upon the open secret; let us remember that the apostle never intended to amuse the curious, when he penned these words, but he wrote them for a practical purpose. Let us read them with a desire to be instructed by them, and may the Holy Spirit teach us to profit. This record was not sent to us merely that we should know that this eminent servant of Christ had abundant revelations, or that he suffered a thorn in the flesh, but it was written for our profit.

One excellent end that may be answered by this narrative lies upon the very surface. We are plainly taught how mistaken we are when we set the eminent saints of the olden times upon a platform by themselves, as though they were a class of super-human beings. Because we fall so far short of them, we excuse our indolence by conceiving them to be of a superior nature to ourselves, so that we cannot be expected to attain to their degree of grace. We elevate them upon a niche out of

the way, so that they may not rebuke us, thus rendering them a homage which they never sought, and denying them a usefulness which they always coveted. As we never try to fly, because we have no angelic wings; so we do not aspire to supreme holiness, because we imagine that we have not apostolic advantages. Indeed, this is a very injurious idea, and must not be tolerated. What the ancient saints were, we may be. They were men of like passions with ourselves, and therefore are most fit and practical examples for us. The Spirit of God which was in them is in all believers, and he is by no means straitened. Their Saviour is our Saviour; his fulness is the fulness out of which all of us have received. Let us put far away from us every notion of separating the holy men of former days from ourselves, as if they were a saintly caste to be admired at a distance, but not associated with as comrades. They fought the common fight, and won by strength available for all believers; let us esteem them as our brethren, and with them pursue the sacred conflict in the name of the common leader. Let us fix our eyes upon these companions of our warfare, and, regarding them as a sympathetic cloud of witnesses, let us run as they ran, that we may win as they won, and may glorify God in our day and generation, as they did in theirs. Paul, my brethren, doubtless enjoyed more revelations than we have done, but then he had a corresponding thorn in the flesh; he rises above us, but he sinks with us also, and so encourages us to emulate his rising. He was a good man, but he was only a man; he was a saint, but he had the infirmities of sinners; he is our brother Paul, though he be "not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles"; and as we read his experience this morning, I hope we shall be made to feel a fellowship with him, and so be spurred on to imitate him.

I. Our text suggests to us, first of all, A DANGER to which the apostle was exposed—"Lest I should be exalted above measure." Upon that let us speak first. Here is a peril to which we are all exposed more or less, but the apostle Paul was especially liable to it, because of his peculiar circumstances. He had been caught up into the third heaven; secret things which had not been seen before were laid bare before his gaze; nor was his eye alone filled: his ear also was sated, for he heard words which it was not possible for him to repeat, and which, could he have repeated, it would not have been expedient for him even to whisper in the unpurified ears of mankind. He had been taken into the innermost part of the third heaven, into that secret paradise where Christ dwells with his perfected saints. He had entered into the nearest communion with God, possible to a man while yet in this life. Should he not feel somewhat exalted? Surely exultation must fill that man's bosom who has been brought within the veil to see his God, and to hear the unutterable harmonies! It was natural that he should be exalted, and it was not unnatural that he should stand in danger of being exalted above measure. Devout exaltation very rapidly degenerates into self-exaltation. When God lifts us up, there is only one step further—namely, our lifting up ourselves; and then we fall into serious mischief indeed. I wonder how many among us could bear to receive such revelations as Paul had? O God, thou mayest well in thy kindness spare us such perilous favours! We have neither head nor heart to sustain so vast a load of blessing. Our little plant needs not a river to water its

root: the gentle dew suffices—the flood might wash it away. How many has God blessed in the ministry for a little while, or, if not in the ministry, in some other form of service? and, alas! how soon have they swollen with conceit, and have become too big for the world to hold them! Puffed up with vanity, the honour put upon them has turned their brain, and they have gone astray into gross folly, sheer vanity, or defiling sin. Much branch and little root has brought down the tree; wing without weight has made the bird the sport of the hurricane. Even Paul's bark, when it enjoyed so mighty a wind of divine revelation, was nearly upset thereby, and would have been totally wrecked had it not been for the Lord's casting in the sacred ballast, of which we shall have to speak by-and-by, when we consider the preventative sorrow which saved Paul from being exalted above measure.

Now, observe, if Paul was in this danger, we cannot hope to be free from it, for he was eminently a holy man, eminently a humble man, eminently a wise man, eminently an experienced man. Though specially favoured, he was one to whom the highest privileges were not such novelties as to intoxicate him with vanity. He had enjoyed earthly honours, he had once been a highly esteemed Rabbi among his fellow countrymen, and this did not elevate him with pride; he counted all his honours but loss, for Christ's sake. He afterwards became a well-beloved apostle of Jesus, and the narrative of his doings and sufferings, which you have in the preceding chapter, is far too long for us to give you even a digest of it, yet he does not seem to have been exalted thereby. He achieved a thousand marvels of heroism, and left them all behind him, pressing forward as though he had hitherto done nothing; and when he had done all, he counted himself to be less than the least of all saints, and the very chief of sinners. He was a man by no means childish and vain, but a man of great mind, deep comprehension, and profound knowledge; he was not readily carried away by approbation, or puffed up with self-esteem. If he knew much, yet he knew also that he knew only in part; and if his judgment was very acute, as it certainly was, yet he often cried, "Oh, the depths!" His was a splendid, well-balanced intellect, sanctified by the grace of God; yet, for all that, he was in danger of being exalted above measure; how much more likely, then, are we who have not his judgment, who have not his knowledge, have never occupied so lofty a station, and have never performed such mighty deeds? If so massive a pillar trembles, what peril surrounds poor reeds, shaken of the wind?

Observe, that in Paul's case the favour which threatened to intoxicate him with pride, was one which did not operate in the common, coarse way in which temptations to vanity usually assail mankind. The most of men who are exalted above measure, are puffed up with the approbation of their fellowmen: they love flattery, they court esteem, and admiring words are the very food their souls feed on. But Paul's gifts from heaven were not things which were likely to excite the high esteem of his fellow-men; it is probable that, had he spoken to his fellow disciples and said, "I have enjoyed revelations," they would have doubted his statement, or have attached but small importance to it; and had he spoken to the outside mass of Jews and heathens upon the subject, he would have become more than ever

the subject of their ridicule. What would have excited more the laughter of the Greek, or the sneer of the Roman, or the wrath of the Jew, than to hear that Paul, the tent-maker, had entered the invisible world, and heard words which it was not lawful for him to utter? Brethren, you thus see that our apostle was not tempted with the common, vulgar temptation of adulation and flattery; his soul would easily have risen superior to so gross an assault, and he would have trodden down the evil like the mire in the streets; but the temptation was more subtle, and more adapted to the noble calibre of the man. He was eminently a self-contained man, a man who had learned to think for himself, and speak for himself, and act for himself; and now the temptation was, that he should say within his own soul, "I have seen for myself and with these eyes, as others have not; I am a seeing man among blind dotards. What know these grovellers? What are they compared with me? I am the favourite of heaven; I have been indulged by the Eternal with an admission into his secret audience chamber; I am something more than the rest of the sons of men." Paul cared nothing either for the frown or the smile of men, he was superior to all that, but his temptation lay within himself; and hence it was the more difficult to grapple with. It may be, brethren, that some of you, not having revelations, yet may possess a something within yourselves—a deep experience, a secret penetration into the marrow of the divine word, an intimate knowledge of some portion of divine truth—and though you would not care about the esteem of your fellow men, or be puffed up by praise, yet this personal consciousness that you have a something that others have not, this sense of superiority to them in some things, may be to you a daily stumbling-block, and create in you an overweening self-esteem.

Now, let us observe that although, in Paul's particular form of it, this temptation to exaltation above measure may not be very common now-a-days, yet, in some shape or other, it waylays the best of Christians. The common run of Christians—and they are very numerous—may not be tempted in this way; but the choice spirits, the elect out of the elect, the *élite* of the saints of God, are most likely to be molested by this tendency to be exalted above measure, through the abundance of gracious revelations. Some real Christians have a constitutional tendency towards inordinate self-esteem; they never err through timidity, but they are very easily led into self-confidence. Every man loves the commendation of his fellow-men: no man living is indifferent to it.

> "The proud to gain it toils on toils endure;
> The modest shun it but to make it sure."

It is vain for us to boast of not caring about it; we do care about it, and our duty is to keep that propensity in check. He who thinks he is humble, is probably the proudest man in the place. But there are some men in whom self-consciousness is so uppermost, and so evidently powerful, that you can see it in almost everything they do. It is their struggle, if they are Christians, to keep it down; but it will come up in the form of being very easily annoyed because they are overlooked in some good work, or in being easily irritated

because they fancy that somebody is opposing them, when probably that somebody never thought of them. The too great prominence of the *Ego* is the fault of many and the danger of all. Not a few have to battle with this all their lives, and I should not wonder if they should be the persons who all their lives also will endure a thorn in the flesh. But there are others to whom the temptation comes in a more refined fashion. They have more knowledge than those among whom they dwell; I mean more scriptural knowledge, more real spiritual knowledge, and a deeper inward experience; and when they hear the prattle of young beginners, or listen to the fearful blunders of many would-be great saints, they cannot help smiling to themselves; and, almost as naturally, they cannot help saying, "Thank God, I do know better than that." The temptation to be exalted above measure, in such a case, is near at hand. They have probably also enjoyed some success in sacred work, while they have seen others idle, indifferent, and consequently unsuccessful. Now, if God gives any man success in winning souls, I am certain that he will be lifted up to his own perdition, unless a corresponding source of humiliation is opened at the same time. We must rejoice in spiritual success, it would be ungrateful not to do so; but we must be on our guard against boastfulness of spirit. My dear friend, if the Lord shall make thee the spiritual parent of a score of souls, wilt thou feel no exultation within thy spirit, as thou shalt see these arrows in the hands of a mighty man—these spiritual children of thy youth? Wilt thou feel no elevation of joy? Shall the father's heart never leap at the sight of his offspring? We must and will rejoice, none shall hinder us of this sacred gladness; but, mark well, that here will be our danger! Among the flowers of gratitude will grow the hemlock of pride. While our thoughts of thankfulness, like angels, adore the Lord, the Satan of self-exaltation will come in among them.

It is most noteworthy that all the things we have spoken of, are none of them justifiable grounds for boasting, if such grounds there ever can be. What if a believer should have received more divine illuminations than his fellow? Did not the Lord give them to him? Why should he boast as if he had not received the favours? Have his own reason, wit, and effort wrought these things? There are two beggars in the street; I give one a shilling and the other a penny—shall the man who obtains the shilling be proud, and glory over his companion? If I give him the larger alms, irrespective of any consideration of merit, but simply because I choose to do what I will with my own, shall he boast? Yet thus foolish are we. Generally the loudest boasting in this world is excited by accidental circumstances. If there be a boy in the school who is conceited, it is not the lad who has worked hard and long at his studies, and so obtained a distinguished position; but the young boaster is generally a youthful genius, who has great readiness at his tasks, and is as lazy as he is gifted. You will not often find that man assume great airs, who has achieved a great invention, and blessed his fellow-men by a valuable discovery; but lofty is the carriage of the brainless aristocrat, who owes his position to the accident of his birth. If we must glory, let us wait till we can do so legitimately, but the bounties of sovereign grace are prostituted when they become the subjects of pride. Shall Jesus, who had

all things in himself, be lowly, and shall we, who owe all to his charity, be lifted up? God forbid.

Beloved, above all things it is dangerous for a Christian to be exalted above measure, for if he be, he will rob God of his glory, and this is a high crime and misdemeanour. The Lord has said, "I will not give my glory to another." To give God's glory to graven images is bad, but to usurp it for ourselves is by no means better. I see no difference between the worship of a God of stone and the worship of a God of flesh. Self is as degrading an idol as Juggernaut or Kalee. God will not honour that man who retains honour for himself. The meek he will exalt, the proud he will abase.

Self-exaltation is equally evil to the church with which the man associates, and the more prominent he is, the more pestilent is his sin. Suppose Paul to have been lifted up, he would have been of small use to the Gentile church afterwards. He would have sought himself, and not the things of Christ; and very soon Paul would have become a maker of parties and the leader of a sect; the cry of "I am of Paul," would have been sweet music to him, and he would in all ways have encouraged those who adopted it, so that a schism would have been the result. Had he been exalted above measure, he might have become a rival rather than a servant of Jesus. He might have disdained his lowly office, and have aspired to lord it over God's heritage. We might have heard of him as a right reverend father in God, rather than as the servant of Jesus Christ and his church.

It would have been bad for ungodly sinners, too, for a proud Paul would never have gone from city to city to be persecuted for preaching the gospel. Proud preachers win not men's hearts. He who is exalted in himself will never exalt the Saviour, and he who does not exalt the Saviour will never win the souls of men.

It would have been worst of all for the apostle himself, for pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. We should have had in Paul's history an awful instance of how men may be like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, for brightness, and yet may fall like Lucifer, into the blackness of darkness for ever. If God had not taken Paul in hand, the danger with which he was surrounded would have been fatal to him. To God's glory, to himself, to sinners, to the gospel, to his own salvation, it would have been a danger indeed. Thus have I spoken upon the peril.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider THE PREVENTATIVE.

Paul says, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Now, note every word here. First, he says, "There was *given* to me." He reckoned his great trial to be a gift. It is well put. He does not say, "There was inflicted upon me a thorn in the flesh," but "There was given to me." This is holy reckoning. O child of God, amongst all the goods of your house, you have not one single article that is a better token of divine love to you than your daily cross. You would fain be rid of it, but you would lose your choicest treasure if it were withdrawn. Blessed be God for the crucible and the furnace. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh." Rich grace bestowed the benison. At first, the apostle may not have seen his thorn to be a gift,

but afterwards, when experience had taught him patience, he came to look at that sharp, pricking, festering torment, as a boon from his heavenly Father. You, O tried one, will come to do the same one of these days. When the vessel first was launched upon the river, and was about to cross the sea, it felt itself light and airy, and ready to bound over the waves, so that it longed for a voyage across the Atlantic, that it might fly like a sea bird over the crest of the billows; but suddenly, to her sorrow, the gallant ship was stopped in her career, and moored close by a bank of sand and shingle, and men began to cast stones and earth into her. Then the barque murmured, "What! am I to be weighed down and sunk low in the water with a cargo of mire and dirt? What a hindrance to my speed! I thought I could fly just now like a sea bird: am I to be weighted till I am like a log?" It was even so; for had not the vessel been thus ballasted, she had soon been wrecked and had never reached the desired haven. That ballast was a gift, a gift as much as if it had been bars of gold or ingots of silver. So your trials, your troubles, and your infirmities, are gifts to you, O believers, and you must regard them as such.

The apostle says, "There was given to me *a thorn*." Note that—"a thorn." If the English word expresses the exact meaning—and I think it is pretty near it—you need not be at a loss to understand the simile. A thorn is but a little thing, and indicates a painful but not a killing trial—not a huge, crushing, overwhelming affliction, but a common matter; none the less painful, however, because common and insignificant. A thorn is a sharp thing, which pricks, pierces, irritates, lacerates, festers, and causes endless pain and inconvenience. Yet it is almost a secret thing, not very apparent to anyone but the sufferer. Paul had a secret grief somewhere, I know not where, but near his heart, continually wherever he might be, irritating him: perpetually vexing him and wounding him. A thorn, a commonplace thing, such as might grow in any field and fall to any man's lot. Thorns are plentiful enough, and have been since Father Adam scattered the first handful of the seed. A thorn—nothing to make a man remarkable, or give him the dignity of unusual sorrow. Some men boast about their great trials, and there is something in feeling that you are a man greatly afflicted; but a thorn could not give even this wretched satisfaction. It was not a sword in the bones, or a galling arrow in the loins, but only a thorn, about which little could be said. Everyone knows, however, that a thorn is one of the most wretched intruders that can molest our foot or hand. Those pains which are despised because they are seldom fatal, are frequently the source of the most intense anguish—toothache, headache, earache, what greater miseries are known to mortals? And so with a thorn. It sounds like a nothing; "it can be easily removed with a needle," so those say who feel it not, and yet how it will fester; and if it remain in the flesh it will generate inconceivable torture. Such was Paul's trial; a secret smarting, incessantly irritating, something—we do not know what.

It was a thorn "*in the flesh*"—in the flesh. He was not tempted in the spirit; it was in the flesh. I suppose the evil had an intimate connection with his body. Many as the leaves of autumn have been the guesses of learned men, as to what Paul's thorn in the flesh was;

almost every disease has had its advocates. I was particularly pleased to find that Rosenmüller thought it to be the gout; but then other critics think it to be weak eyesight, stammering, or a hypochondriacal tendency. Richard Baxter, who suffered from a very painful disorder, which I need not mention, thought that the apostle was his fellow-sufferer. One divine is of opinion that Paul endured the earache; and I generally find that each expositor has selected that particular thorn which had pierced his own bosom. Now, I believe that the apostle did not tell us what his peculiar affection was, that we may every one feel that he had sympathy with us—that we may every one believe that ours is no new grief. It was a trial mainly of the body, and from the use of the term "flesh," rather than "body," it would seem that it excited in the sufferer some fleshly temptation. It may not be so, but still, the writer is so accustomed to associate with "the flesh" the idea of sin, that I think it no idle conjecture that some temptation which the good man considered he had effectually overcome, fell upon him by reason of his bodily ailment; and it became, therefore, to him not merely a thorn in his flesh, but "a messenger of Satan," tempting him to an evil which he abhorred, and which for many a day had been so trampled down by his nobler nature, that he almost thought such a propensity extinct within him.

Then he adds, "*The messenger of Satan.*" Not Satan—it was not a great enough temptation for that. It was a "messenger of Satan;" one of Satan's errand boys, nothing better, a suggestion from an inferior evil spirit. He does not set it down to the Great Master Spirit, but to a mere messenger of the prince of darkness; it was not intended by God that Satan should, on this occasion, come forth against Paul, for such an encounter might not have humbled him. It is a grand thing to fight Satan face to face and foot to foot; a stern joy fills a brave man's heart when he feels that before him stands a foeman worthy of his steel! A combat with the arch-enemy might not, therefore, have humbled Paul—but to be beset by a mean, sneaking devil; not a great, grand fiend, but a mere lackey of hell; and to be troubled and tormented by so mean an adversary, this was galling and humiliating to the last degree, and therefore, all the better for the purpose for which it was sent, namely, to prevent his being lifted up. "What," Paul seemed to say, "am I to fight with such a contemptible temptation as this? Am I, who have built up the Church and seen the Lord, and been caught up into the third heaven—am I to do battle with this miserable, base, despicable propensity, which I thought I had done with these fourteen years ago?" Yes, so it was, the Lord had sent "a messenger of Satan" to buffet him.

And that word "*buffet.*" Note that:—to cuff him. That is it. Not to fight with him with the sword; that is manly, soldierly work; but to buffet him as masters used to cuff their slaves, or as pedagogues box the ears of boys. Paul seems to feel the degradation of being buffeted. "I that would do battle with Satan, and put on the helmet of hope, the breastplate of confidence, and go forth against all the powers of hell,—am I to be cuffed as though I were a slave, and chastened as though I were a boy? Must I be smitten by these vain and wretched temptations, which even in my spiritual youth I was able

to subdue?" Every part of the process tended to lower him, and it was intended to do so, lest he should be exalted above measure.

You see, brethren, that this preventative was well adapted to work out its design, for assuredly it would recall the apostle from ecstacies and excitements, and make him feel that he was in the body after all. He said once, "Whether in the body, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell;" but when the thorn in the flesh was tearing him he soon settled that question. This made him feel he was a man, even as others. He had dreamed, perhaps, that he was growing very angelic, but now he feels intensely human. This made him feel only a man—that, though he was filled so full with God, still he was only a man, and could be filled as full with the devil, too, if deserted by grace. This made him feel that he was a weak man, for he had to do battle with base temptations, temptations that seemed not worth fighting with; he had to be cuffed and buffeted in a small way, like the babes in grace. This made him know that he was a man in danger, and needed to fly to God for refuge; for here he was, ready to be exalted above measure even by divine blessings, and ready to be provoked into sin by the mere buffetings of an evil spirit.

From all this I gather, that the worst trial a man may have may be the best possession he has in this world; that the messenger of Satan may be as good to him as his guardian angel; that it may be as well for him to be buffeted of Satan as ever it was to be caressed of the Lord himself; that it may be essential to our soul's salvation that we should do business not only on deep waters, but on waters that cast up mire and dirt. The worst form of trial may, nevertheless, be our best present portion.

I perceive, also, that the worst and deepest experience may only be the needful complement of the highest and the noblest; I mean it may be necessary that if we are lifted up we should be cast down. It may only be part and parcel of the cry, "Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee," that we should have to groan out, also, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." The two fit into each other like the pieces of a puzzle, they rise and fall like the scales of a balance, and, without its fellow, either of them might be ominous to us.

Learn, also, that we must never envy other saints. If we hear Paul speak of his visions, let us recollect his thorn in the flesh; if we meet with a brother who rejoices abundantly, and whom God owns and blesses, let us not conclude that his pathway is all smooth. His roses have their thorns, his bees their stings. As for ourselves, let us never wish to be without our daily cross. The kite broke away from its string, and instead of mounting to the stars it descended into the mire. The river grew weary of its restraining banks, and longed to burst them, that it might rush on in the wild joy of freedom; down went the embankments, the river became a flood, and carried destruction and desolation wherever it rushed. Unrein the coursers of the sun, and, lo! the earth is burned; unbind the girdle of the elements, and chaos reigns! Let us never desire to be rid of those restraints which God has seen fit to lay upon us; they are more needful than we dream. Remember, how the vine, when bound to the stake which upheld it,

judged itself a martyr, and longed to be free; but when it saw the wild vine at its feet, rotting in the damps and pining amidst the heats, and producing no fruit; it felt how needful were its bonds if its clusters were ever to ripen. Be content, dear brother, to keep the thorn in the flesh, if it saves thee from being exalted above measure.

III. THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF THIS THORN UPON PAUL.

First—It drove him to his knees. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice." Anything is a blessing which makes us pray. This thorn compelled Paul to cry unto God, and, having commenced to pray, he resorted to prayer again and again. "I besought the Lord thrice." It may be that this was the exact number of his special prayers on that point: it may, however, only intimate that he often cried to God for deliverance from this trouble. Yes, we may be lax in prayer when all things flow with even current, but we multiply prayers when *trials* increase. In this way, Paul was kept from being proud. The revelations now seemed forgotten, for the thorn in the flesh was the more prominent thing of the two. Now, he would not speak about visions, and could not; for, when his tongue was tempted to move upon that subject, the thorn began to prick his side again. A man does not *want* to tell pretty stories when his head is aching, or when sharp pains are goading him. Paul was not allowed to dazzle himself with the brightness which God had set before him; his thoughts were turned in another direction, yea, blessedly turned to the mercy-seat, where he could get no evil, but must derive much profit. He continued *still* to pray, till at last he received for an answer, not the removal of the thorn, but the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee." God will always honour our prayers; he will either pay us in silver or in gold; and sometimes it is a golden answer to prayer to deny us our request, and give us the very opposite of what we seek. If you were to *tell* your child that you would grant him anything he asked for, you would not intend by that that you would give him a poisonous drug, if some one should delude him into the idea that it would be useful to him. You would mean that you would give your child all that was really good for him. God, therefore, knowing that this thorn in the *flesh* was a sacred medicine to Paul, would not take it away, even though most urgently requested to do so. Well does Ralph Erskine say of prayer—

> "I'm heard when answered soon or late,
> Yea, heard when I no answer get;
> Most kindly answered when refused;
> And treated well when harshly used."

So, though refused, Paul was answered; for he got something better than the taking away of the thorn in the flesh; and the result was that the grace given him enabled him to bear the thorn, and lifted him right above it, till he even rejoiced, and gloried to think that he was permitted so to suffer. "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." This is a grand thing. Supposing any person here is very poor, and he has prayed the Lord many a time to raise him above want, and at last God has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee," what more can he need? My dear brother, rejoice in poverty, and thank God that you are poor, if

the Lord is the better glorified thereby ; be grateful for your low estate, and say, "I have the honour to be permitted to glorify God in poverty." Perhaps it may be you are the subject of a painful bodily infirmity, and you have prayed to have it removed; yet the Lord knows that your infirmity is for his glory, and your good. Well, when he says, "My grace is sufficient for thee," accept and bear the trial not only with resignation, but with acquiescence. Wish not to change your estate. Your heavenly Father knoweth best.

IV. Now lastly, THE PERMANENT RESULT of this preventative upon Paul. For the present you see it kept him from being exalted, by making him pray and by leading him to receive more grace, but permanently, the remedy was very successful, for through the power of the Holy Spirit, it kept him humble always. This thorn in the flesh made him humble in reference to his visions, for he became silent about them. Fourteen long years rolled away, and the apostle never told anybody that he had been caught up into the third heaven. I gather from the way in which he puts it here, that he never mentioned it to a soul. This was singular. Why, if I were caught up into the third heaven, I should tell you of it the first time I had the chance of addressing you; and I warrant that most here would not be long before they would impart to their friends the blessed secret. The thorn in the flesh must have had a powerful effect upon the apostle's mind, when it led him to wrap up his treasure in his bosom, and go through the world, nobody being any the wiser for all that he had seen. He was a humble man indeed.

When he did tell it, it was dragged out of him. He told it for a purpose. It was only because the Corinthians had denied his apostleship, and said, "What does he know concerning divine things?" that he felt bound to vindicate his character, and he would not have told it else. Notice how modestly he speaks of it—in such a way that it does not leave the impression on your mind that he was an eminently honoured man through receiving the revelation. The impression received rather is, how weak it was of Paul to be exalted above measure, and how gracious it was of God to give him the thorn in the flesh to keep him where he should be. Observe that his way of telling the story is modest in its very form, but it is especially humble in its spirit, for he takes us off from the idea of how gloriously God revealed himself to Paul, and makes us rather look at the weakness of the recipient of the revelation than at the great honour conferred by the revelation.

It is no small matter when God sends a thorn in the flesh and it answers its end, for in some cases it does not. Without the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, thorns are productive of evil rather than good. In many people, their thorn in the flesh does not appear to have fulfilled any admirable design at all; it has created another vice, instead of removing a temptation. We have known some whose poverty has made them envious; others whose sickness has rendered them impatient and petulant; and others, again, whose personal infirmity has rendered them perpetually fretful and rebellious against God. O, dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, let us labour against this with all our might, and if God has been pleased to put a fetter upon us in any shape or way, let us ask him not to allow us to make this the occasion for fresh folly, but, on the contrary, to

bear the rod and learn its lessons. Pray that when we are afflicted we may grow in grace and in likeness to our Lord Jesus, and so bring more honour to his name. Does not this teach us all the solemn duty of being content, whatever our lot may be—content without the revelation if we are without the thorn—content with the thorn, if we have the revelation—content without either revelation or thorn, so long as we may but have a humble hope in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

O, beloved, what a happy people God's people are, and ought to be, when everything turns for their good, when even the thorn that was a curse becomes to them a blessing, and out of the lion comes forth honey. If the thorn be a blessing, what must the blessing itself, be? If the smarts of earth heal us, what will the joys of heaven do for us? Let us be glad! Ours is a happy portion! Let us go on our way rejoicing that we are favoured to possess divine life, and shoulder our cross cheerfully, for we shall soon (ah, how soon!) wear our crown.

The last thought of all is, what a sad thing it must be not to be a believer in Jesus Christ, because thorns we shall have if we are not in Christ, but those thorns will not be blessings to us. I understand drinking bitter medicine, if it is to make me well; but who would drink wormwood and gall with no good result to follow? I can understand toiling if a wage is in prospect, but I cannot see the sense of toiling when there is no reward for it. Now, you who love not God, your lives are not all flowers and sunshine. It is not all music and dancing with you now. I know you have your cares and troubles, you have your thorns in the flesh, and perhaps a great many of them; but you have no Saviour to run to. You are like a ship in a storm, and there is no harbour for you; you are as birds driven before the wind, and you have no nests in which to shelter, but must be driven for ever before the blast of Jehovah's wrath. Consider this, I pray you, meditate upon your condition and prospects, and when you have so done, may your heart cry out, "I would fain have God to be my friend." Remember that he who sent Paul thorns for his good, once wore a thorn-crown himself, for the salvation of sinners; and if you will come and bow before him as he wears that diadem, and trust him as the Son of God made flesh for sinners, and bleeding and dying for them, you shall be saved this morning; your sins which are many, shall be forgiven you; and though I cannot promise you that you shall be without a thorn as you live, I can promise you that your thorns shall be removed; they shall become to you a rich blessing, which will be better still. There is one thorn you shall never have, if you believe in Jesus, the thorn of unforgiven sin, the fear of the wrath to come. You shall have the peace of God which passeth understanding, which shall keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus. O, that some would trust in Jesus this morning. Go, brethren, and pray it may be so. The Lord grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm XXV.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

DWELL DEEP, O DEDAN!

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan."—Jeremiah xlix. 8.

We do not quite know who these inhabitants of Dedan were, but in all probability they were some Arabian tribe or tribes. Perhaps they were descendants of Keturah. This Arabian tribe probably dwelt in the rock city of Petra, and were mingled with the Edomites. The prophet warned them that God was about to destroy the Edomites: "For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes." And the text intends one of two things—either to inform these inhabitants of Dedan, that, however, deep in the cavernous rocks they should hide themselves, they would certainly be destroyed; or else it was a gracious warning to remove from Edom, strike their tents, and retreat into the depths of the wilderness, and so escape from the invaders. I find the marginal reference of my Comprehensive Bible says, "This is an allusion to the custom of the Arabs, who, when attacked by a powerful foe, withdraw into the wilderness. Always on their guard against tyranny, on the least discontent that is given them they pack up their tents, lade their camels with them, ravage the country, and, laden with plunder, they retire into the burning sands where none can pursue them, and so "*dwell deep.*" We will take our text in the two senses I have indicated. "Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan." This may be understood sarcastically and instructively: let us pray that to us, in both senses, it may be instructive. From ancient warnings let us gather present benefit.

I. Let us take it SARCASTICALLY. It is as though the prophet said to these Edomites, and those that dwelt with them: "You think you never can be destroyed, for your city is situated in a rocky defile, where a handful of men can hold the pass. You suppose that the mightiest armies will fail to conquer you, and therefore you are very proud; but your pride is vain." "Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the

pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord." That word has been terribly fulfilled, for the ancient rock-city stands as a wonder to all travellers, and when they ride through it, which is not often, for it is with great difficulty that you reach the place at all, they find the city standing, but the houses desolate, and without inhabitants. Edom is a perpetual desolation, because of her sins. Though they carved their houses into the solid rock, and their city seemed out of the spoiler's reach, God has laid his hand upon it, and its life, as well as its beauty, is gone for ever. Thus said the Lord, and so it has come to pass, "also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man man dwell in it."

From the text I hear a cry, like the stern voice of Elias, to every profane sinner who thinks that he will ultimately escape the wrath of God. Thou mayest dwell deep, O transgressor, but God shall find thee out. Thou sayest, "How shall he reach me?" The hand of death has only to be stretched out, and thou art his captive at once: and a little thing will do it—the wind has but to pass over thee, and thou art gone. A drop of blood may go the wrong way, a valve may refuse to open, a vessel may burst, a band may snap, and there thou liest, beneath God's avenging hand, like a stag smitten by the hunter. Thou art dust, and a breath will scatter thee to the four winds. Thy spirit will be equally unable to escape from God. When it leaves this body, whither will it fly? It finds itself naked—disembodied; and straight before it is the throne of God, and the seat made ready for judgment. Devils shall drag the guilty spirit down to hell, and bind it with links of infinite despair. And when the day of judgment shall have fully come, and the body shall have risen, and the entire man shall stand before God, there will be no escape for the sinner! The eye of Christ will look into the face of every man of woman born that shall stand upon the earth and upon the sea in the dread day of wrath, and that look will ensure the eternal condemnation of all the unbelieving. No one will be in so far-off a country that the Judge will not see him, nor will he be able to find a cavern or deep mine wherein he shall be able to conceal himself from the face of him that sits upon the throne. Then will the ungodly bitterly desire to dwell deep; they will call to the rocks to hide them, and to the hills to fall upon them, but all in vain; for thus saith the Lord: "Though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them." Darkness will not be able to conceal you; the glance of the Judge's eye shall shrivel up the vesture of night, and lay all things bare. O, guilty, Christless soul! there is no escape from God. Though thou dwell deep as hell—even there would he find thee. In the days of the old Roman empire, the whole world was so completely under the Imperial sway, that if a man once transgressed against Cæsar

he was imprisoned already, for all the nations were but one great Roman prison. If a man fled to the uttermost ends of the earth, he would still find the Roman legionary to arrest and the Roman lictor to punish him. Behold, the universe is thus surrounded by Jehovah's Imperial forces! Earth, hell, and heaven, are the Lord's; whither then canst thou fly? Do what thou wilt, thou art always before his eye, and always within reach of his hand. "Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan," but in vain shall be all your craft and cunning concealments, for God will assuredly find you out.

The same solemn warning may be applied to those who are self-righteous, and who think that they are forming a hiding-place for themselves. I would turn to them, and say, You think that you will save yourselves by your works. Ah! labour mightily; for hard must be your toil if you think to finish a righteousness of your own. In the very fire must you labour. You would make a dwelling for yourself as secure as the Rock of Ages? You had need build anxiously. I do not wonder that you are ill at ease I wonder you have any peace, for the labours which you propose are more stupendous than those of Hercules! You would work miracles without the God of miracles! Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! Like Babel's tower, self-righteous efforts will end in failure, and abide only as a monument of folly. I could fain, if I were in that humour, speak to the self-righteous with bitter irony, as did Elijah to the false prophets, when he said of Baal, "Cry aloud: for he is a god!" If, indeed, there be salvation by works, wear your fingers to the bone, and your bodies to skeletons. Weep out your eyes with penances, and furrow your backs with chastisements. Ye plough the desert sand and sow the salt sea. Plough on, sow on, ye fools and dotards! Rest ye in your sacraments, and your priests! Be born again in sprinkling, be confirmed by episcopal hands, and then eat your breaden god! Get ye up at the daily tinkling of your bell to adore the flour and water, which ye both worship and swallow! Go on your knees and repeat your *Paternosters*, and your *Aves*, and count your beads; fast not only on Fridays, but on all days of the week, and put on your hair shirts, and wear a girdle of spikes. You had need do many such things, for no little matters will quiet conscience and give the soul peace. To fill a bottomless tub with water, is nothing to the labour of self-salvation! To build a house with bubbles, twist a rope of sand, or weld an anchor of spray, were easier far. Fools! can sinners keep a perfect law? Can finite effort satisfy infinite justice? Can a bankrupt, without a penny, put his creditor under obligations? Can a vile worm deserve at the hands of the thrice Holy God? But, ah, 'tis folly altogether! "By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified." "By the law is the knowledge of sin," and nothing more. All the efforts that a man can make to earn heaven, must end in disappointment and despair. "Ye must be born again;" ye must believe in Christ Jesus; ye must be saved through his great salvation. There is no hope for you, O ye who are dwelling deep in your own works. It is a sorry, sorry dwelling. I will not use the text to you sarcastically, as I might, but I will rather say, fly from your good works as you would fly from your sins. Have no more confidence in your goodness than in your badness; for if you rely on what

you do that is good, you will be as surely lost as if you had depended upon your sins. Whether the sand be white or red is of small consequence; in either case it is a bad foundation. You need a better basis, even that which was laid of old by God in the covenant of grace, even Christ Jesus, the Rock of our salvation.

The same text, in the same way, might be applied to those who are hypocrites, and are practising secret sins while they yet wear the name of Christ, and are numbered amongst his people. They maintain a creditable position in the church, and yet indulge privately in evil habits. This class is the great trial of the ministry; and in every church there are some of them. They profess to love the Lord Jesus, but they are traitors in the camp. They are fair apples, but rotten at the core! Gilded cheats, painted shams, counterfeits, impostors! O, it is a horrible thing to find a man coming to the communion table, who worships the bottle and goes to bed intoxicated. He talks about the love of Christ, and yet he is a drunkard; he partakes of the cup of the Lord, and dotes upon the cup of devils! And there is another who is, perhaps, temperate in diet and liberal to the church; but, at the same time, he is dishonest in his transactions abroad. He can never be trusted—he pays no one, except by compulsion. He has no sense of honour, and yet he has an uppermost seat in the synagogue. Nor is this all, for, alas! we have known some who could talk very loudly about what they knew of personal religion and divine grace, who at the same time were raking in the very lowest kennels of vice. How can I bear to think of such beings! O, Paul! I do not wonder at thee, when I hear thee say, "I now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Such base deceivers are *the enemies* of the cross of Christ above all others. The Trojans were safe inside, and the legions of the Greeks could do them but little harm so long as they were outside, the walls; but when the wooden horse was brought in, with the Greeks concealed inside, the city was taken. The enemies inside the church do her the most serious damage—she suffers most from those fearfully presumptuous sinners who are not satisfied with sinning in the King's kingdom, but must needs sin in the King's palace, who dare to bring their filthinesses even to his own table, and pollute it. If any of you who are hypocrites hope to escape, you need dwell deep indeed! Where are the deep places which can afford refuge to religious pretenders? Where shall liars conceal themselves? O, hypocrite! it may be you have planned your sin so cleverly that the wife of your bosom does not know it: your scheme is so admirably cunning that you carry two faces, and yet no Christian sees other than that Christian mask of yours. Ah, sir! but you are a greater fool than I take you for, if you think you can deceive your God. Your own conscience must be very uneasy. Hypocrites are the devil's martyrs; they endure a life-long martyrdom of constraint and fear. I have seen, when I was a boy, a juggler in the street throw up half-a-dozen balls, or knives and plates, and continue catching and throwing them, and to me it seemed marvellous; but the religious juggler beats all others hollow. He has to keep up Christianity and worldliness at the same time, and catch two sets of balls at once. To be a freeman of Christ and a slave of the world, at the same time,

must need fine acting. One of these days you, Sir Juggler, will make a slip with one of the balls, and your game will be over. A man cannot always keep it up, and play the game so cleverly at all hours; sooner or later he fails, and then he is made a hissing and a by-word, and becomes ashamed, if any shame be left in him. O, "dwell deep, ye inhabitants of Dedan," if you think to escape from God's eye and from the revealing power of his providence. Better were it for you to come right out, and throw away your cloaks, and be deceivers no longer. Cast off your double-mindedness. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well," for it is time to seek the Lord, and may God grant you his effectual grace that you may do so at once, ere he condemn you to the lowest hell.

II. But now we will use the text INSTRUCTIVELY, in which view, the first and natural sense would be, that the prophet warns the tribe of Dedan, who had come to live among the Edomites, to go away from them, and dwell in the depths of the wilderness; so that when the destroyer came, they might not participate in Edom's doom. It was the warning voice of mercy, separating its chosen from among the multitude of the condemned.

Now this suggests to me one observation: The people of God, like the tribes of Dedan, to some extent, dwell in Edom. Your business, your duty, is to come out from among them. "Be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." I often marvel how some who really love the Lord, and believe his truth, can put up with the errors of the churches with which they are connected. There are churches which preach doctrine that is far other than the gospel of Christ; such, for instance, as the doctrine that unconscious infants are made members of Christ and children of God, by the sprinkling of a little water. God will plague such a church as surely as he is God. Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues! I love the saints in the Church of England, but I marvel at their abiding in such company! It is our duty to flee as far from error as possible, and enter into no confederacy with falsehood. There are Nonconformist churches where the gospel is not preached, and intellect is put in the place of faith; I charge you separate yourselves from such. What fellowship has light with darkness? How can you love the Lord, and be in league with those who despise his word? While some cry out for unity, I would say a word for truth. Unity, indeed! What have we to do with that, while Ritualism and Rationalism with their abominations defile the land? I dare no more be a member of a church which did not hold the pure truth of God in the love of it, than I dare join a band of pirates. Our Lord entered into no covenant with Scribe and Pharisee, Sadducee or Herodian; but remained "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Better go to heaven alone, than to hell in company. Better be true to God, with Abdiel, "faithful among the faithless found," than win the applause of the crowd by great liberality and equal inconsistency.

More important still, however, is the separation of every Christian from worldly habits, customs, and ways. Wherever you are, dear friend, though you must be *in* the world, take care that you be not *of* it. "Come ye out from among them: be ye separate, saith the Lord, touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord

Almighty." It is only in the lonely path of the true disciple of Christ, who follows the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, that you can realise your adoption, and cry, Abba, Father. Come out from the world: confess yourself to be on the Lord's side, and then your fellowship with God shall be sweet beyond degree! Range yourself under the divine banner and by God's grace remain a separatist from the world until life's latest hour. So shall you, like Abraham, be a sojourner with God. "Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan," right away from the world's customs and sins, and above all from its selfish spirit and grovelling aims! Dwell deep in the solitudes where Jesus dwelt—in the lonely holiness which was fostered on the cold mountain's side, and then shone resplendent amid temptation and persecution! Commit yourself unto no man; call no man master; lean on no arm of flesh; walk before the Lord in the land of the living, and so dwell deep, as did your Lord.

But I do not wish to enlarge upon that point. The practical matter I am aiming at lies in another direction. My earnest desire is that every saved soul among you may dwell deep, that is to say, that none of you may be superficial Christians, but that you may be deep believers, well rooted plants of grace, thorough, downright, out-and-out Christians—that you may not only dwell in the Rock of Ages, but dwell deep in it. To this let me call your attention.

It is highly important, beloved, that every one of us should have a deep sense of sin, and a profound horror of it. Those who have but slight convictions, if those convictions bring them to the Saviour, are safe; but such persons should pray the Lord to deepen in them their sense of the evil of sin. Slight thoughts of sin lead to slight thoughts of grace, and what can be worse? Nothing is more to be dreaded than a flimsy religion, frail as the spider's web, unsubstantial as the air. Lord, give me deep repentance. Teach me to know my sin, and all the evils which lurk in it; make me to shudder at it, and dread it as a burnt child dreads the fire. Do not, dear friend, be like those people who jauntily confess, "yes, we are sinners," but who merely intend thereby, to chime in with a general form of speech. Such false speeches are a mockery of God. Thank God, if you have been laid low under the law. Bless God, for deep subsoil ploughing and trenching. I desire to feel, every day, that sin is an exceeding bitter thing, a deadly evil, a moral poison, the essence of hell. O, to loathe iniquity and see with self-abhorrence its heinous character; for so shall we prize the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love which thought it, the blood which bought it, and the grace which wrought it out!

Should your convictions of sin be already deep, then seek to dwell deep as to your *faith* in Jesus Christ. Much of the faith which passes current in the world is not faith: it is mere talk. We say we believe, but *do* we believe? We say "Yes, I trust," but *do* we trust? Is it a real trust? Is it such a trust as will stand the test of the dying hour? Are we really divorced from our self-confidences and in very deed married to our Lord Jesus Christ as our only confidence? O, to have solid faith—the faith which will survive the removal of all things and outlive the general fire! O, brethren and sisters, ask the Lord to deepen your faith, to confirm, establish, and perfect it. And you who are now coming forward to confess your faith in Jesus—if you have only a grain

of mustard seed of faith, it will save you, blessed be God; but I exhort you to seek for larger degrees of it.

O you who in these regions profess to abide in the Lord, may you dwell deep in Christ. When you get upon the rock of Christ Jesus you are safe, but when you get into the rock then you are happy. A man on the rock will be subject to the wind and to the rain, to the damp of dews, and to the heat of the sun; but, O! a man *in* the rock—it does not matter to him what weather it is—whether it blows or shines, he is sheltered. O! to get fully into Christ—to have a deep experience of our union with him, and a solemn conviction deepening into a full assurance of our exaltation in him! Beloved, this is indeed to dwell in the Goshen of Christianity. This is to drink the choice wines of the kingdom. The nearer to Jesus the more perfect our peace. The innermost place of the sanctuary is the most divine.

So would I have you, beloved friends, dwell deep in the matter of Christian study. He who knows himself a sinner, and Christ a Saviour, is certainly justified; but we desire to be something more than saved. The babe in grace is the Lord's child: but we do not wish to be always infants; there is a time when we should be no more children. Christ's babes should grow up to be men in Christ Jesus; and my earnest entreaty to all professors, both young and old, is, "Let us seek deeply to study the word of God, that by feeding upon it we may grow." An instructed Christian is a more useful vessel of honour for the Master, than an ignorant believer. I do not say that instruction is all, far from it; there is much in zeal, and, with but slender knowledge, a man full of zeal may do a great deal; but if the zealous man has knowledge in proportion, how much more will he achieve? Dig deep in your researches into the Scriptures, beloved friends. I am always afraid lest any of you should take your doctrinal views from me, and believe doctrines merely, because I have taught you to do so. I charge you, if I preach anything that is not according to the Lord's word, away with it!—and though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than the gospel of Jesus Christ, away with it!—do not regard our persons for a moment, in comparison with divine authority. Study the character of Christ. Do not merely know that he is Christ, but *who* he is—whose Son he is, and what he is, and what he did, and what was meant by what he did, and what he is doing, and what he will do, and all the glorious hopes which cluster around his first and his second advent—all the precious truths of the covenant of grace, and the glorious attribute of eternal love. Do not be afraid of what are called the "deep things of God." I do not mean that you young beginners are to give your thoughts to them, to the exclusion of the simplicities of the gospel; but at the same time, when you know the Lord savingly, go on to know yet more and more. Comprehend with all saints, what are the depths and heights. Entrench yourselves in the precious truths of God's word—no bulwarks are so strong.

Above all things, and beyond all things, would I earnestly impress upon my beloved friends the need of deep living unto God. There is such a thing as flimsy living, in which you pray, and pray,—yes, but it it is a superficial, routine exercise. O, how I bless God when I can pray

deep dwelling prayers—when my heart groans unto God, and pours out her very self into his bosom! And how delightful it is to sing one of the deep songs, when the innermost heart praises and magnifies God; and how delightful to get into deep fellowship with Jesus Christ, till the Lord himself is revealed in you, and you eat his flesh, drink his blood, and have his life in you! Dwell deep, beloved! Those who dwell upon the preacher do not dwell deep; but those who feed upon the Master himself, are strong and joyous. Those who live only upon outward ordinances, and do not practice private devotion, and are not abundantly with God in secret communion—those do not dwell deep.

Get to the roots of things. The gold mines of Scripture are not in the top soil, you must open a shaft; the precious diamonds of experience are not picked up in the roadway, their secret places are far down. Get down into the vitality, the solidity, the veracity, the divinity, of the word of God, and seek to possess with it all the inward work of the blessed Spirit. It is of small use to learn a doctrine, unless, in the most emphatic sense, you learn it *by heart*. John Bunyan intended this when he said that the truths which he learned were burnt into him. No man in very deed knows a truth till it has forced its way into him, and permanently impressed its image upon him. You may have a doctrine hammered into your head by argument till you are quite convinced, and yet no practical result will follow; but, O, if it is stamped into your heart with divine energy, the consequences will be very different. I am not a Calvinist by choice, but because I cannot help it. The truths I preach are in me, part and parcel of myself: I do not carry my creed, but my creed carries me. It should be so with us as to all we know of divine truth. This deep knowing, deep feeling, deep living—this it is that makes sound work and lasting work for eternity! In one word, as the Lord is bringing in many recruits into this church—and we are glad to receive the rawest among you—my anxious desire is that they may be trained to be good soldiers of Christ, able to endure hardness in years to come. We want you new plants to have good roothold, so that you may grow up into Christ in after years, and bring forth fruit to his name. We are anxious that you should make a sound beginning; for, if a man is about to build a house, if he is unused to building he may think he is doing well if he sets to work upon the ground as it is, and runs up several courses of bricks; but every man who is an experienced builder knows that instead of doing well he is wasting his time, since every brick must come down again. If there be no foundation, all he builds will be worthless, and the higher he goes the greater his loss. O, for a good foundation!—to be emptied right out by repentance, and digged deep by conviction, and the rubbish of self thrown out of you—this is a great blessing; for the deeper the foundation the higher the tower can be carried, and the deeper our sense of sinfulness and nothingness the greater is the possibility of our being built up into the fulness, and strength, and perfection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

If any enquire what are our reasons for bringing forward at this time such an exhortation as this, I will briefly answer them.

Brethren, it is well for us to dwell deep, because trials will surely come. Presumest thou, O young beginner, that thy warfare is finished now

thou hast enlisted? Ah! simple child, "let not him that putteth on his armour boast as though he put it off." You have come up to the starting-point, and you already think the prize your own. O man, thou hast but commenced running, and thy life is the length of the race! Thou wilt have to run and run till thou shalt lay down thy race with thy body; thou wilt never have finished till then. "What! But when I am saved, surely I shall have no more fightings." Hearken: the moment thou art saved the fightings will begin. "But shall I feel an evil heart after I am born again?" Yes, and more than ever; for the new life that is in you will hate the old nature, and the old Adam will hate the new Adam. There will be a conflict in your soul, such as you never knew before, and it will be perpetual. Do not think that Christ has come to send peace into your soul of the sort you look for; he makes no peace with evil, but draws the sword. There will be fightings and wars within your spirit until you die. Now, you must have deep work, or else these inward trials will offend you. You remember John Bunyan's wise picture, in "Pilgrim's Progress," of Christian and Pliable? Christian read his book, and told Pliable of a beautiful city to which he was going, where there were streets of gold, and harps of the richest music; and, says Pliable, "I will go with you: I would gladly be there." When he told him all about how Evangelist had instructed him, and when he read to him the roll, "Oh," said Pliable, "this is very pleasant; the hearing of this is enough to ravish one's heart. Come on, let us mend our pace." But, as they went on, the road became very muddy, by-and-by their feet began to slip, and after awhile they were both up to their necks in a slough. "Oh," says Pliable, "is this that happiness you have told me of? If we have such ill speed at our first setting out, what may we expect between this and our journey's end? May I get out again with my life, you shall possess the brave country alone for me!" And with that he gave a desperate struggle or two, and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next to his own house, and Christian saw him no more. O! if it is not a work of grace when you get a little soul-trouble you will say, "Ah! I will have none of this. I thought it was going to be all 'hallelujahs' and 'bless the Lord!' I did not look for depressions and bewilderments." Now, when I hold up my Master's colours and invite recruits, I am by no means eager to enlist cowards. I want those who for God's sake and by his Spirit will go through the Slough of Despond, resolved to escape from the City of Destruction. You must "dwell deep," then, or inward trials will send you back to the world again.

There will be outward trials, too; for when a man puts on the name of Christ the world soon raises a hue-and-cry against him, and they say, "Here is another of your Methodists," or "another of your Presbyterians," and they straightway bring forth some of their old stock epithets, hoping that to give a dog an ill name may go a long way towards hanging him. They have a fine name for some of you who belong to this church, and they daub you over with it as plentifully as Noah pitched his ark. If the work of grace be not deep in the heart of a ridiculed professor, he will say, "I don't see why I should be laughed at. I wish to be respectable, and cannot afford to be lowered for religion's sake." Ah!

yours is a poor religion if a set of grinning sinners can laugh you out of it. Only a plant in stony soil will be dried up by the heat of persecution; if you are grounded and settled, no trials of cruel mockings, or any other assaults of the enemy will overturn you.

Again, there is a necessity that you should dwell deep, beloved, for in these days many errors have gone abroad in the world, and many teachers of heresy and infidelity; and if you do not dwell deep, they will shake you terribly. When a soul is once established in Christ, and has eaten bread with him, and seen the things of the kingdom as they are revealed in him, why, if all the infidels in the world were to come to such a person, and object, and object, and object, their efforts would not be worth a farthing, for they would not turn him the breadth of a hair! Even though such a man may be in other respects ignorant and weak, yet, if he has been with Jesus, he will be wise and strong. Communion with Christ braces up the spirit. He who has been plunged into the sea of divine fellowship is invulnerable. A certain sceptic had often troubled an aged Christian woman about many things, and upon many points he had ridiculed her. At last, she ended the fight by a declaration of faith, which cleared all the ground at once. He said to her, "Why, you are not such a fool as to believe that a great fish swallowed Jonah. You cannot believe such a monstrous fable." "Man," said she, "God's Word says it, and if the Lord had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would have believed him." Her faith in the veracity of God explained all difficulties, and as she was immoveably settled upon that matter, there was no use in arguing against her. Men call this blind faith, but I call it faith with her eyes open looking alone to God. When faith dwells thus deep, the heaviest shells that our foes can hurl from the Krupp guns of their logic are no more injurious to the fortifications of our comfort than so many paper pellets thrown by a schoolboy. No;

> "Should all the forms that men devise
> Assail my soul with treacherous art,
> I'll call them vanity and lies,
> And bind the gospel to my heart."

But you must dwell deep to be able to do that; otherwise, arguments with sceptics and papists will be your terror and your danger, and difficulties will arise which will greatly mar your peace. May you have grace to dwell so near to God that it shall be impossible for evil insinuations to enter into your spirit.

Dwell deep, dear friends, for there are seasons coming when all your grace will be wanted. I have never heard of a man coming to mischief through having too much grace. I never heard yet of any person falling into danger through living too near to God; nor do I think most men suffer through being too careful in self-examination or too anxious to be right. Presumption brings a thousand evils, but holy carefulness brings very few, if any. You will have to die, beloved, soon; and, though you may rejoice in the prospect of being with Christ, death, after all, is no child's play. He who would die triumphantly, will need God's arm to bear him up. The river is in itself a deep and chilling river, and if the Lord, who is immortality and life, be not

with us it will be a drowning river; but if we have solid faith we shall pass over safely. But, mark you, no sham faith will help you then. If you are in your senses, and honest, all the bladders of self-confidence will fail you then. What do those poor souls do who have dreamed of heaven, and discover when they are dying that their hope is a mere dream? O, what will false church members do? What will the hypocritical deacon do? Above all, what will the unfaithful minister do, who, when he comes to die, finds that he has preached to others, and has no part nor lot in this matter himself? When it is too late to take to another ship, to have all shipwrecked for ever! What horror this must be! God grant it may not be so with any of you, and, therefore, beloved, in fair weather look to your vessel. It was a shameful thing, say what anyone will, to send the ship to sea we have been reading of lately, that was all worm-eaten, and her iron, even her *iron*, quite rusted through. It would have been infinitely better to have had her well examined, and not to have sent an unworthy ship out at all. But you see they ran on a beach, and happily saved all the crew; but if you go to sea spiritually in a leaky ship like that, there is no saving you. You are lost, and lost for ever! O, if you have got into this professional barque, which is rotten, get out of her, though you lose all your comfort, and see all your experience go down. Let it go down, if it be a lie. It is better that a man be a beggar and be true, than be a prince and be a liar. What care I for the gewgaw tinsel crown, that men put on who strut upon the boards of a theatre? Shall I esteem the mimic sovereigns, and bow down to them, as if they were true kings and princes? No; the poorest man who is himself, is better than the grandest man who is a sham. God grant that we may stand the test of dying. But there is a still more terrible test than dying, for some sleep quietly through death, but, oh, the judgment! I see two ponderous scales, huge as hemispheres of this great globe, and there I see the weights—the standard weights of eternal justice. Into yonder scales every one of us must go, and what if there should be heard the dreadful sound, "Mene, mene, tekel?" "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting!" There will be no hope then, of making up the short weight or of coming up to the standard. Lost then, we shall be cast away for ever. O, if you only get an inch towards heaven, let it be a safe inch; for a safe inch is better than a counterfeit yard, and one drachm of grace is better than a million tons of profession. One genuine tear is better than a sea-full of washing your hands in outward ceremonies. Let your religion be real, dear friends. "Dwell deep."

And I will give this other reason—dwell deep; because those who live near to God, and are substantial in godliness, are the happiest of people. The top of the cup of religion may be bitter, but it grows sweeter the deeper down you drink. The cup at Satan's banquet is sweet upon the brim, where the bubbles glow like rainbows, but, ah, the horrid dregs of it! The cup that Christ gives has no dregs, but it has at its bottom the sweetness of the wines on the lees, well refined. And, O, the inexpressible sweetness when you get to the bottom of all—where there is no bottom indeed—when you get a drink of eternal joys and never ending blessings!

While this deep living gives a man more happiness, it also endows him with more strength. Some single Christians of my acquaintance are worth twenty ordinary ones, because they enter into the very marrow of religion, and then impress others with the reality of it. I know at this moment Christian women, who are worth fifty ordinary professing women. I would not say the others are not very good, too, in their way, but they are superficial compared with these deep-taught daughters of Zion. O God, if the church is to be strong, it must be through those that dwell deep!

And so, beloved, let me close by saying here, dwell deep, for you will glorify God most. The nearer you get to the sun, the brighter you will be. The nearer you live to Christ, the more like him you will be. Dwell deep, beloved. Beware of levity in godliness: beware of superficiality: beware of skimming. Seek to enjoy the deep, the blessed, the true reality! The Lord grant it to you for his name's sake. But still let me say to any who have not begun the divine life, this is not for you just now. I talked to you last night and the night before, and you know I bade you come to Christ just as you were; and so I do now, for saving work is coming and touching even the hem of the Redeemer's garment. If you *have* touched the hem of his garment, do not be satisfied with that; go on to know him more, and long, like Simeon, to take him up in your arms, and say, "This Christ is mine—the blessed Christ—mine for ever and for ever." God bless you, beloved friends!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xv. 1—16.

A BAZAAR, to raise funds for a new School-room, and other buildings for the Stockwell Orphanage, is announced for December 31st and three following days, to be held in the Lecture Hall of the Tabernacle. As yet very few goods have come in, and Mr. Spurgeon hereby appeals to the readers of his sermons for prompt assistance. The cause of the Orphan appeals to the heart of every man.

NOW READY, price one shilling, the first number of the INTERPRETER, a new work by Mr. Spurgeon. It is a real family Bible, consisting of passages of Scripture selected for each day, and briefly expounded. Heads of families will find it invaluable. By ordering at once, the reader can begin the year with the work, and he will find it add greatly to the interest and instruction of family worship. Passmore and Alabaster, 4, Paternoster Buildings, E.C.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JESUS, THE KING OF TRUTH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 19TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."—John xviii., 37.

THE season is almost arrived when by the custom of our fellow-citizens we are led to remember the birth of the holy child Jesus, who was born "king of the Jews." I shall not, however, conduct you to Bethlehem, but to the foot of Calvary; there we shall learn, from the Lord's own lips, something concerning the kingdom over which he rules, and thus we shall be led to prize more highly the joyous event of his nativity.

We are told, by the apostle Paul, that our Lord Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. It was a good confession as to the manner of it, for our Lord was truthful, gentle, prudent, patient, meek, and yet, withal, uncompromising, and courageous. His spirit was not cowed by Pilate's power, nor exasperated by his sneers. In his patience he possessed his soul, and remained the model witness for the truth—both in his silence and in his speech. He witnessed a good confession also, as to the matter of it; for, though he said but little, that little was all that was needful. He claimed his crown rights, and, at the same time, declared that his kingdom was not of this world, nor to be sustained by force. He vindicated both the spirituality and the essential truthfulness of his sovereignty. If ever we should be placed in like circumstances, may we be able to witness a good confession too! We may never, like Paul, be made to plead before Nero; but, if we should, may the Lord stand by us, and help us to play the man before the lion! In our families, or among our business acquaintances, we may have to meet some little Nero, and answer to some petty Pilate; may we then also be true witnesses. O that we may have grace to be prudently silent or weekly outspoken, as the matter may require, in either case being faithful to our conscience and our God! May the sorrowful visage of Jesus, the faithful and true witness, the Prince of the kings

of the earth, be often before our eye, to check the first sign of flinching, and to inspire us with dauntless courage!

We have before us, in the words of the text, a part of our Saviour's good confession touching his kingdom.

I. Note, first of all, that OUR LORD CLAIMED TO BE A KING. Pilate said, "Art thou a king, then?" asking the question with a sneering surprise that so poor a being should put forth a claim to royalty. Do you wonder that he should have marvelled greatly to find kingly claims associated with such a sorrowful condition? The Saviour answered, in effect, "It is even as thou sayest, I am a king." The question was but half earnest; the answer was altogether solemn: "I am a king." Nothing was ever uttered by our Lord with greater certainty and earnestness.

Now, notice, that our Lord's claim to be a king was made without the slightest ostentation or desire to be advantaged thereby. There were other times when, if he had said "I am a king," he might have been carried upon the shoulders of the people, and crowned amid general acclamations. His fanatical fellow countrymen would gladly have made him their leader at one time; and we read that they would have "taken him by force and made him a king." At such times he said but little about his kingdom, and what he did say was uttered in parables, and explained only to his disciples when they were alone. Little enough did he say in his preaching concerning his birthright as the Son of David and a scion of the royal house of Judah; for he shrank from worldly honours, and disdained the vain glories of a temporal diadem. He who came in love to redeem men, had no ambition for the gewgaws of human sovereignty. But now, when he is betrayed by his disciple, accused by his countrymen, and in the hands of an unjust ruler; when no good can come of it to himself; when it will bring him derision rather than honour; he speaks out plainly and replies to his interrogator, "Thou sayest that I am a king."

Note well the clearness of our Lord's avowal; there was no mistaking his words: "I am a king." When the time has come for the truth to be spoken, our Lord is not backward in declaring it. Truth has her times most meet for speech, and her seasons for silence. We are not to cast our pearls before swine, but when the hour has come for speech we must not hesitate, but speak as with the voice of a trumpet, giving forth a certain sound, that no man may mistake us. So, though a prisoner given up to die, the Lord boldly declares his royalty, though Pilate would pour derision upon him in consequence thereof. O, for the Master's prudence to speak the truth at the right time, and for the Master's courage to speak it when the right time has come. Soldiers of the cross, learn of your Captain.

Our Lord's claim to royalty must have sounded very singularly in Pilate's ear. Jesus was, doubtless, very much careworn, sad, and emaciated in appearance. He had spent the first part of the night in the garden in an agony; in the midnight hours he had been dragged from Annas to Caiaphas, and from Caiaphas to Herod; neither at daybreak had he been permitted to rest, so that, from sheer weariness, he must have looked very unlike a king. If you had taken some poor ragged creature in the street, and said to him, "Art thou a king,

then?" the question could scarcely have been more sarcastic. Pilate, in his heart, despised the Jews as such, but here was a poor Jew, persecuted by his own people, helpless and friendless; it sounded like mockery to talk of a kingdom in connection with him. Yet never earth saw truer king! None of the line of Pharaoh, the family of Nimrod, or the race of the Cæsars, was so intrinsically imperial in himself as he, or so deservedly reckoned a king among men by virtue of his descent, his achievements, or his superior character. The carnal eye could not see this, but to the spiritual eye it is clear as noonday. To this day, pure Christianity, in its outward appearance, is an equally unattractive object, and wears upon its surface few royal tokens. It is without form or comeliness, and when men see it, there is no beauty that they should desire it. True, there is a nominal Christianity which is accepted and approved of men, but the pure gospel is still despised and rejected. The real Christ of to-day, among men, is unknown and unrecognised as much as he was among his own nation eighteen hundred years ago. Evangelical doctrine is at a discount, holy living is censured, and spiritual-mindedness is derided. "What," say they, "This evangelical doctrine, call you it the royal truth? Who believes it now-a-days? Science has exploded it. There is nothing great about it; it may afford comfort to old women, and to those who have not capacity enough for free thought, but its reign is over, never to return." As to living in separation from the world, it is called Puritanism, or worse. Christ in doctrine, Christ in spirit, Christ in life —the world cannot endure as king. Christ chanted in cathedrals, Christ personified in lordly prelates, Christ surrounded by such as are in king's houses, *he* is well enough; but Christ honestly obeyed, followed, and worshipped in simplicity, without pomp or form, they will not allow to reign over them. Few now-a-days will side with the truth their fathers bled for. The day for covenanting to follow Jesus through evil report and shame appears to have gone by. Yet, though men turn round upon us, and say, "Do you call your gospel divine? Are you so preposterous as to believe that your religion comes from God and is to subdue the world?"—we boldly answer; "Yes!" Even as beneath the peasant's garb and the wan visage of the Son of Mary we can discern the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father! so beneath the simple form of a despised gospel we perceive the royal lineaments of truth divine. We care nothing about the outward apparel or the external housing of truth; we love it for its own sake. To us, the marble halls and the alabaster columns are nothing, we see more in the manger and the cross. We are satisfied that Christ is the king still where he was wont to be king, and that is not among the great ones of the earth, nor among the mighty and the learned, but amongst the base things of the world and the things which are not, which shall bring to nought the things that are, for these hath God from the beginning chosen to be his own.

Let us add, that our Lord's claim to be a king shall be acknowledged one day by all mankind. When Christ said to Pilate, according to our version, "Thou sayest that I am a king," he virtually prophesied the future confession of all men. Some, taught by his grace, shall in this

life rejoice in him as their altogether lovely King. Blessed be God, the Lord Jesus might look into the eyes of many of us, and say, "Thou sayest that I am a king," and we would reply, "We do say it joyfully." But the day shall come when he shall sit upon his great white throne, and then, when the multitudes shall tremble in the presence of his awful majesty, even such as Pontius Pilate, and Herod, and the chief priests, shall own that he is a king! Then to each of his astounded and overwhelmingly convinced enemies he might say, "Now, O despiser, thou sayest that I am a king," for to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord!

Let us remember, here, that when our Lord said to Pilate, "Thou sayest that I am king," he was not referring to his divine dominion. Pilate was not thinking of that at all, nor did our Lord, I think, refer to it: yet, forget not that, as divine, he is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We must never forget that, though he died in weakness as man, yet he ever lives and rules as God. Nor do I think he referred to his mediatorial sovereignty, which he possesses over the earth for his people's sake; for the Lord has all power committed unto him in heaven and in earth, and the Father has given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as are given him. Pilate was not alluding to that, nor our Lord either, in the first place; but he was speaking of that rule which he personally exercises over the minds of the faithful, by means of the truth. You remember Napoleon's saying, "I have founded an empire by force, and it has melted away; Jesus Christ established his kingdom by love, and it stands to this day, and will stand." That is the kingdom to which our Lord's word refers, the kingdom of spiritual truth in which Jesus reigns as Lord over those who are of the truth. He claimed to be a king, and the truth which he revealed, and of which he was the personification, is, therefore, the sceptre of his empire. He rules by the force of truth over those hearts which feel the power of right and truth, and therefore willingly yield themselves to his guidance, believe his word, and are governed by his will. It is as a spiritual Lord that Christ claims sovereignty among men; he is king over minds that love him, trust him, and obey him, because they see in him the truth which their souls; pine for. Other kings rule our bodies, but Christ our souls, they govern by force, but he by the attractions of righteousness; theirs is, to a great extent, a fictitious royalty, but his is true, and finds its force in truth.

So much, then, upon Christ's claims to be a king.

II. Now, observe, secondly, that OUR LORD DECLARED THIS KINGDOM TO BE HIS MAIN OBJECT IN LIFE. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." To set up his kingdom was the reason why he was born of the virgin. To be King of men, it was necessary for him to be born. He was always the Lord of all; he needed not to be born to be a king in that sense, but to be king through the power of truth, it was essential that he should be born in our nature. Why so? I answer, first, because it seems unnatural that a ruler should be alien in nature to the people over whom he rules. An angelic king of men would be unsuitable; there could not exist the sympathy which is the cement of a spiritual empire. Jesus, that he might govern by force of love and truth alone, became of one nature

with mankind; he was a man among men, a real man—but a right noble and kingly man, and so a King of men.

But, again, the Lord was born that he might be able to save his people. Subjects are essential to a kingdom; a king cannot be a king if there be none to govern. But all men must have perished through sin, had not Christ come into the world and been born to save. His birth was a necessary step to his redeeming death; his incarnation was necessary to the atonement.

Moreover, truth never exerts such power as when it is embodied. Truth spoken may be defeated, but truth acted out in the life of a man is omnipotent, through the Spirit of God. Now, Christ did not merely speak the truth, but he *was* truth. Had he been truth embodied in an angelic form, he had possessed small power over our hearts and lives; but perfect truth in a human form has royal power over renewed humanity. Truth embodied in flesh and blood has power over flesh and blood. Hence, for this purpose was he born. So when ye hear the bells ringing out at Christmas, think of the reason why Jesus was born; dream not that he came to load your tables and fill your cups; but in your mirth look higher than all earth-born things. When you hear that in certain churches there are pompous celebrations and ecclesiastical displays, think not for this purpose was Jesus born. No; but look within your hearts, and say, for this purpose was he born: that he might be a King, that he might rule through the truth in the souls of a people who are by grace made to love the truth of God.

And then he added, "For this cause came I into the world;" that is, he came out of the bosom of the Father that he might set up his kingdom, by unveiling the mysteries which were hid from the foundation of the world. No man can reveal the counsel of God, but one who has been with God; and the Son who has come forth of the ivory palaces of gladness, announces to us tidings of great joy! For this cause also came he into the world, from the obscure retirement of Joseph's workshop, where, for many years he was hidden like a pearl in its shell. It was needful that he should be made known, and that the truth to which he witnessed should be sounded in the ears of the crowd. Since he was to be a King, he must leave seclusion, and come forth to do battle for his throne; he must address the multitudes on the hill-side; he must speak by the sea-shore; he must gather disciples, and send them forth by two and two to publish on the housetops the secrets of mighty truth! He came not forth because he loved to be seen of men, or courted popularity; but for this purpose—that, the truth being published, he might set up his kingdom. It was needful that he should come out into the world and teach, or truth would not be known, and consequently could not operate. The sun must come forth, like a bridegroom out of his chamber, or the kingdom of light will never be established; the breath must come forth from the hiding-place of the winds, or life will never reign in the valley of dry bones. During three years, our Lord lived conspicuously, and emphatically "came into the world." He was seen of men so closely as to be beheld, looked upon, touched, and handled. He was intended to be a pattern, and therefore, it was needful that he should be seen. The life of a man who lives in absolute retirement may be admirable for himself and acceptable with God, but

it cannot be exemplary to men: for this cause the Lord came forth into the world, that all he did might influence mankind. His enemies were permitted to watch his every action, and to endeavour to entrap him in his speech, by way of test; his friends saw him in privacy, and knew what he did in solitude; thus his whole life was reported—he was observed on the cold mountain-side at midnight, as well as in the midst of the great congregation. This was permitted to make the truth known, for every action of his life was truth, and tended to set up the kingdom of truth in the world.

Let us pause here. Christ is a king, a king by force of truth in a spiritual kingdom; for this purpose was he born; for this cause came he into the world. My soul, ask thyself this question:—Has this purpose of Christ's birth and life been answered in thee? If not, what avails Christmas to thee? The choristers will sing, "Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given." Is that true to thee? How can it be unless Jesus reigns in thee, and is thy Saviour and thy Lord? Those who can in truth rejoice in his birth are those who know him as their bosom's Lord, ruling their understanding by the truth of his doctrine; their admiration by the truth of his life; their affections by the truth of his person. To such he is not a personage to be pourtrayed with a crown of gold and a robe of purple, like the common theatrical kings of men; but one brighter and more heavenly, whose crown is real, whose dominion is unquestionable, who rules by truth and love! Do we know this King?

This question may well come home to us, for, beloved, there are many who say, "Christ is my King," who know not what they say, for they do not obey him. He is the servant of Christ who trusts in Christ, who walks according to Christ's mind, and loves the truth which Jesus has revealed: all others are mere pretenders.

III. But now I must pass on. Our Lord, in the third place, REVEALED THE NATURE OF HIS ROYAL POWER. I have already spoken on that, but I must do so again. We should have thought the text would have run thus: "Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should establish my kingdom." It is not so in words, but so it must mean, for Jesus was not incoherent in his speech. We conclude that the words employed have the same meaning as that which the context suggests, only it is differently expressed. If our Lord had said, "That I might establish a kingdom," he might have misled Pilate; but when he availed himself of the spiritual explanation, and said that his kingdom was truth, and that the establishment of his kingdom was by bearing witness to the truth, then, though Pilate did not understand him—for it was far above his comprehension—yet, at any rate, he was not misled.

Our Lord, in effect, tells us that truth is the pre-eminent characteristic of his kingdom, and that his royal power over men's hearts is through the truth. Now, the witness of our Lord among men was emphatically upon real and vital matters. He dealt not with fiction, but with facts; not with trifles, but with infinite realities. He speaks not of opinions, views, or speculations, but of infallible verities. How many preachers waste time over what may be or may not be! Our Lord's testimony was pre-eminently practical and matter-of-fact, full of

verities and certainties. I have sometimes, when hearing sermons, wished the preacher would come to the point, and would deal with something that really concerned our soul's welfare. What concern have dying men with the thousand trivial questions which are flitting around us? We have heaven or hell before us, and death within a stone's-throw; for God's sake do not trifle with us, but tell us the truth at once! Jesus is king in his people's souls, because his preaching has blessed us in the grandest and most real manner, and set us at rest upon points of boundless importance. He has not given us well-chiselled stones, but real bread. There are a thousand things which you may not know, and you shall be very little the worse for not knowing them; but O, if you do not know that which Jesus has taught, it shall go ill with you. If you are taught of the Lord Jesus, you shall have rest for your cares, balm for your sorrows, and satisfaction for your desires. Jesus gives sinners who believe in him the truth which they need to know; the assurance of sin forgiven through his blood, favour ensured by his righteousness, and heaven secured by his eternal life.

Moreover, Jesus has power over his people because he testifies not to symbols, but to the very substance of truth. The Scribes and Pharisees were very fluent upon sacrifices, offerings, oblations, tithes, fastings, and the like; but what influence could all that exert over aching hearts? Jesus has imperial power over contrite spirits, because he tells them of his one real sacrifice and of the perfection which he has secured to all believers. The priests lost their power over the people because they went no further than the shadow, and sooner or later all will do so who rest in the symbol. The Lord Jesus retains his power over his saints because he reveals the substance, for grace and truth are by Jesus Christ. What a loss of time it is to debate upon the fashion of a cope, or the manner of celebrating communion, or the colour suitable for the clergyman's robes in Advent, or the precise date of Easter. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! Such trifles will never aid in setting up an everlasting kingdom in men's hearts. Let us take care lest we also set great store by externals, and miss the essential, spiritual life of our holy faith. Christ's kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!

The power of King Jesus in the hearts of his people lies much in the fact that he brings forth unalloyed truth, without mixture of error. He has delivered to us pure light and no darkness; his teaching is no combination of God's word and man's inventions; no mixture of inspiration and philosophy; silver without dross is the wealth which he gives his servants. Men taught of his Holy Spirit to love the truth, recognise this fact and surrender their souls to the royal sway of the Lord's truth, and it makes them free, and sanctifies them; nor can anything make them disown such a sovereign, for as the truth lives and abides in their hearts, so Jesus, who is the truth, abides also. If you know what truth is, you will as naturally submit yourselves to the teachings of Christ as ever children yield to a father's rule.

The Lord Jesus taught that worship must be true, spiritual, and of the heart, or else it would be nothing worth. He would not take sides with the temple at Gerizim or that on Zion, but he declared that the time was come when *those* who worshipped God would worship him

in spirit and in truth. Now, regenerate hearts feel the power of this, and rejoice that it emancipates them from the beggarly elements of carnal ritualism. They accept gladly the truth that pious words of prayer or praise are vanity, unless the heart has living worship within it. In the great truth of spiritual worship, believers possess a Magna Charta, dear as life itself. We refuse to be again subject to the yoke of bondage, and cleave to our emancipating king.

Our Lord taught, also, that all false living was base and loathsome. He poured contempt on the phylacteries of hypocrites and the broad borders of the garments of oppressors of the poor. With him, ostentatious alms, long prayers, frequent fasts, and the tithe of mint and cummin, were all nothing when practised by those who devoured widows' houses. He cared nothing for white-washed sepulchres and platters with outsides made clean, he judged the thoughts and intents of the heart. What woes were those which he denounced upon the formalists of his day! It must have been a grand sight to have seen the lowly Jesus roused to indignation, thundering forth peal on peal his denunciations of hypocrisy. Elias never called fire from heaven one half so grandly. "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," is the loudest roll of heaven's artillery! See how, like another Samson, Jesus slays the shams of his age, and piles them heaps upon heaps to rot for ever. Shall not he who teaches us true living be king of all the sons of truth? Let us even now salute him as Lord and King.

Besides, beloved, our Lord came not only to teach us the truth, but a mysterious power goes forth from him, through that Spirit which rests on him without measure—which subdues chosen hearts to truthfulness, and then guides truthful hearts into fulness of peace and joy. Have you never felt when you have been with Jesus, that a sense of his purity has made you yearn to be purged of all hypocrisy and every false way? Have you not been ashamed of yourself when you have come forth from hearing his word, from watching his life, and, above all, from enjoying his fellowship—quite ashamed that you have not been more real, more sincere, more true, more upright, and so a more loyal subject of the truthful King? I know you have. Nothing about Jesus is false or even dubious; he is transparent—from head to foot he is truth in public, truth in private, truth in word, and truth in deed. Hence it is that he has a kingdom over the pure in heart, and is vehemently extolled by all those whose hearts are set upon righteousness.

IV. And now, in the fourth place, our Lord DISCLOSED THE METHOD OF HIS CONQUEST. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, *that I should bear witness for the truth.*" Christ never yet set up his kingdom by force of arms. Mahomet drew the sword, and converted men by giving them the choice of death or conversion; but Christ said to Peter, "Put up thy sword into its sheath." No compulsion ought to be used with any man to lead him to receive any opinion, much less to induce him to espouse the truth. Falsehood requires the rack of the Inquisition, but truth needs not such unworthy aid; her own beauty, and the Spirit of God, are her strength. Moreover, Jesus used no arts of priestcraft, or tricks of superstition. The foolish are persuaded of a dogma, by the fact that it is promulgated by

a learned doctor of high degree, but our Rabboni wears no sounding titles of honour; the vulgar imagine that a statement must be correct if it emanates from a person who wears lawn sleeves, or from a place where the banners are of costly workmanship, and the music of the sweetest kind: these things are arguments with those who are amenable to no other; but Jesus owes nothing to his apparel, and influences none by artistic arrangements. None can say that he reigns over men by the glitter of pomp, or the fascination of sensuous ceremonies. His battle-axe is the truth; truth is both his arrow and his bow, his sword and his buckler. Believe me, no kingdom is worthy of the Lord Jesus but that which has its foundations laid in indisputable verities; Jesus would scorn to reign by the help of a lie.

True Christianity was never promoted by policy or guile, by doing a wrong thing, or saying a false thing. Even to exaggerate truth is to beget error, and so to pull down the truth we would set up. There are some who say, "Bring out one line of teaching, and nothing else, lest you should seem inconsistent." What have I to do with that? If it be God's truth, I am bound to deliver it all, and to keep back none of it. Policy, like a sailing vessel, dependant on the wind, tacks about hither and thither; but the true man, like a vessel having its motive power within, goes straight onward in the very teeth of the hurricane. When God puts truth into men's souls, he teaches them never to tack or trim, but to hold to truth at all hazards. This is what Jesus always did. He bore witness to the truth, and there left the matter; being guileless as a lamb.

Here it will be fit to answer the question, "What truth did he witness to?" Ah, my brethren, what truth did he *not* witness to? Did he not mirror all truth in his life? See how clearly he set forth the truth that God is love. How melodious, how like a peal of Christmas bells, was his witness to the truth that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." He also bore witness that God is just. How solemnly he proclaimed that fact! His flowing wounds, his dying agonies rang out that solemn truth, as with a knell which even the dead might hear. He bore witness to God's demand for truth in the inward parts; for he often dissected men and laid them bare, and opened up their secret thoughts and discovered them to themselves, and made them see that only sincerity could bear the eye of God. Did he not bear witness to the truth that God had resolved to make for himself a new people and a true people? Was he not always telling of his sheep who heard his voice, of the wheat which would be gathered into the garner, and of the precious things which would be treasured up when the bad would be thrown away? Therein he was bearing witness that the false must die, that the unreal must be consumed, that the lie must rust and rot; but that the true, the sincere, the gracious, the vital, shall stand every test, and outlast the sun. In an age of shams, he was always sweeping away pretences and establishing truth and right by his witness. And now, beloved, this is the way in which Christ's kingdom is to be set up in the world. For this cause the church born, into the world, and for this end came she that she might set up Christ's kingdom by bearing

witness to the truth. I long, my beloved, to see you all witness-bearers. If you love the Lord, bear witness to the truth. You must do it personally; you must also do it collectively. Never join any church whose creed you do not entirely and unfeignedly believe, for if you do you act a lie, and are, moreover, a partaker in the error of other men's testimonies. I would not for a moment say anything to retard Christian unity, but there is something before unity, and that is, "truth in the inward parts" and honesty before God. I dare not be a member of a church whose teaching I knew to be false in vital points. I would sooner go to heaven alone than belie my conscience for the sake of company. You may say, "But I protest against the error of my church." Dear friends, how can you consistently protest against it when you profess to agree with it, by being a member of the church which avows it? If you are a minister of a church, you do in effect say before the world, "I believe and teach the doctrines of this church;" and if you go into the pulpit and say you do not believe them, what will people conclude? I leave you to judge that. I saw a church tower the other day, with a clock upon it, which startled me by pointing to half-past ten when I thought it was only nine; I was, however, quite relieved when I saw that another face of the clock indicated a quarter past eight. "Well," thought I, "whatever time it may be, that clock is wrong, for it contradicts itself." So if I hear a man say one thing by his church-membership and another by his private protest, why, whatever may be right, he certainly is not consistent with himself.

Let us bear witness to the truth, since there is great need of doing so just now, for witnessing is in ill repute. The age extols no virtue so much as "liberality," and condemns no vice so fiercely as bigotry, *alias* honesty. If you believe anything and hold it firmly, all the dogs will bark at you. Let them bark: they will have done when they are tired! You are responsible to God, and not to mortal men. Christ came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and he has sent you to do the same; take care that you do it, offend or please; for it is only by this process that the kingdom of Christ is to be set up in the world.

Now, the last thing is this. Our Saviour, having spoken of his kingdom and the way of establishing it, DESCRIBED HIS SUBJECTS: "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." That is to say, wherever the Holy Spirit has made a man a lover of truth, he always recognises Christ's voice and yields himself to it. Where are the people who love the truth? Well, we need not enquire long. We need not Diogenes' lantern to find them, they will come to the light; and where is light but in Jesus? Where are those that would not seem to be what they are not? Where are the men who desire to be true in secret and before the Lord? They may be discovered where Christ's people are

discovered ; they will be found listening to those who bear witness to the truth. Those who love pure truth, and know what Christ is, will be sure to fall in love with him and hear his voice. Judge ye, then, this day, brethren and sisters, whether ye are of the truth or not ; for if you love the truth, you know and obey the voice which calls you away from your old sins, from false refuges, from evil habits, from everthing which is not after the Lord's mind. You have heard him in your conscience rebuking you for that of the false which remains in you ; encouraging in you that of the true which is struggling there. I have done, when I have urged on you one or two reflections.

The first is, beloved, Dare we avow ourselves on the side of truth at this hour of its humiliation ? Do we own the royalty of Christ's truth when we see it every day dishonoured. If gospel truth were honoured everywhere, it would be an easy thing to say "I believe it ;" but now, in these days, when it has no honour among men, dare we cleave to it at all costs ? Are you willing to walk with the truth through the mire and through the slough ? Have you the courage to profess unfashionable truth ? Are you willing to believe the truth against which science, falsely so-called, has vented her spleen ? Are you willing to accept the truth although it is said that only the poor and uneducated will receive it ? Are you willing to be the disciple of the Galilean, whose apostles were fishermen ? Verily, verily, I say unto you, in that day in which the truth in the person of Christ shall come forth in all its glory, it shall go ill with those who were ashamed to own it and its Master.

In the next place, if we have heard Christ's voice, do we recognise our life-object ? Do we feel, "For this end were we born, and for this cause came we into the world, that we might bear witness to the truth ?" I do not believe that you, my dear brother, came into the world to be a linendraper, or an auctioneer, and nothing else. I do not believe that God created you, my sister, to be merely and only a sempstress, a nurse, or a housekeeper. Immortal souls were not created for merely mortal ends. For this purpose was I born, that, with my voice in this place, and everywhere else, I might bear witness to the truth. You acknowledge that : then I beg you, each one, to acknowledge that you have a similar mission. "I could not occupy the pulpit," says one. Never mind that : bear witness for the truth where you are, and in your own sphere. O waste no time or energy, but at once testify for Jesus.

And now, *last of all*, do you own Christ's superlative dignity, beloved? *Do you see what a King, Christ is?* Is he such a King to you as *none other could be? It* was but yesterday a prince entered *one of our great towns, and* they crowded all their streets *to welcome him—*

He was but a mortal man. And then at night

they illuminated their city, and made the heavens glow as though the sun had risen before his appointed hour. Yet what had this prince done for them? Loyal subjects were they, and that was the reason of their joy. But O, beloved, we need not ask, "What has Christ done for us?"—we will ask, "What has he not done for us?" Emmanuel, we owe all to thee! Thou art our new creator, our Redeemer from the lowest pit of hell! In thyself resplendent and altogether lovely, thy beauties command our adoration! Thou hast lived for us, thou hast bled for us, thou hast died for us; and thou art preparing a kingdom for us, and thou art coming again to take us to be with thee where thou art! All this commands our love. All hail! all hail! Thou art our King, and we worship thee with all our soul!

Beloved, I beseech you love Christ, and live for him while you can. Work while opportunity serves. While I have been laid aside, and able to do nothing, the great sorrow of my heart has been my inability to do him service. I heard my brethren shouting in the battle-field, and I saw my comrades marching to the fight, and I lay like a wounded soldier in the ditch, and could not stir, save that I breathed a prayer that you might all be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. This was my thought: "Oh, that I had preached better while I could preach, and lived more for the Master while I could serve him!" Don't incur such regrets in the future by present sluggishness, but live now for him who died for you!

If any present in this assembly have never obeyed our King, may they come to trust in him to-night; for he is a tender Saviour, and is willing to receive the biggest and blackest sinner who will come to him. Whosoever trusts in him, will never find him fail; for he will save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. May he bring you to his feet, and reign over you in love. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxv.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE HEXAPLA OF MYSTERY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22ND, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."—1 Timothy iii. 16.

THE apostle tells us in the preceeding verse that the Lord has a double design in maintaining his church in the world. The first is that it may be the place of his abode, for the church of the living God is "the house of God," the home wherein he reveals himself unto his own children, the resting-place of his love which he has of old appointed. Jehovah still inhabits the praises of Israel, and still he fulfills his promise to his chosen, "I will dwell in them and walk in them" (2 Cor. vi. 16). Blessed is the church which has realised this first design of God, and so has continued to enjoy the Lord's presence and power. May we in this place be a building fitly framed together, and grow unto a holy temple in the Lord, for a habitation of God through the Spirit. God's next purpose in sustaining a church in the world is that it may preserve and uphold his truth among men, for the church of the living God is "the pillar and ground of the truth." The gospel must be believed, practised, and proclaimed by men of God, or it will not have power. God does not trust the conservation of his truth to books, or to the most accurately written creeds, or to some one person supposed to be infallible, but he puts the incorruptible seed into the hearts of his chosen, and in such good soil its vitality and its growth secure its preservation. Even the inspired word, as a letter, has small power till it gains a lodging-place for the truth in a warm heart, and then it grows and yields fruit, till its boughs spread far and wide, and its seeds are wafted on the wings of every wind, to spring up on the hills and among the vallies where none had looked for them. As long as one copy of the Holy Scriptures remains in the world we shall have the pure truth among us, but it will be like an unplanted seed. For the propagation of the gospel, human voices are required; for the establishment and confirmation of it among men, human lives are needed; and God intends that his gospel shall be set

forth and held up, published, defended, maintained, and supported in the world by his church; not alone by his ministers, nor by a hierarchical establishment, but by the entire company of faithful men. To the sacramental host of his elect has he committed the banner of the truth, which they are always to unfold, and carry on by the power of his Spirit, from victory to victory. In this sense, the church of the living God is, and ever must be, "the pillar and ground of the truth;" let us take care, in our measure to make her so.

While dealing with this question, it was most fitting for the apostle to tell us what the truth is, and now is the most proper time for each one of us to learn what are the vital and essential truths which the church of God is for ever to maintain. Our text is for this reason deeply interesting; it deals not with questionable and debatable topics, but with things verily, and, indeed, received among us. Its testimony is short, but weighty. We cannot spare a single word from it, and it would be a crime to add anything to it. The apostle calls it a "mystery," and so, indeed, it is, for exceeding greatness of meaning, but not for obscurity of language, for it is as plain as it is full. Neither is it a mystery because it speaks of recondite opinions, or philosophical theories, for it deals only with facts, and is an historical summary of actual occurrences.

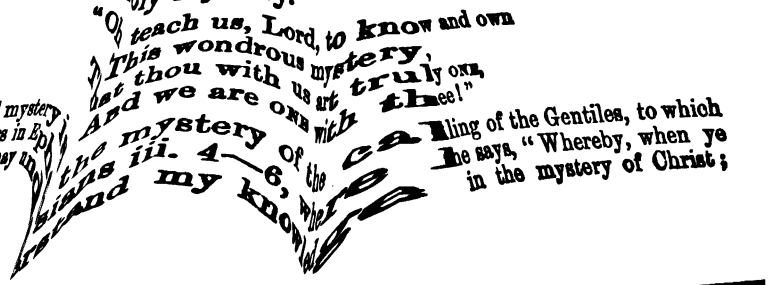
Observe that the comprehensive summary of the gospel here given is contained in six little sentences, which run with such regularity of measure in the original Greek, that some have supposed them to be an ancient hymn; and it is possible that they may have been used as such in the early church. There is a poetic form about the six sentences. You are aware, of course, that the Orientals do not consider it essential to sacred psalms and hymns that they should resound with jingling rhymes; we are the slaves of mere sound in that respect, but they are free. Their fashion of verse-making has more respect to the sense than ours, and lies, as a rule, very much in introducing pleasant parallels and contrasts. These you have here, whether the six paragraphs are verses of a hymn or no. Note that "manifest in *the flesh*" is contrasted with "justified in *the spirit;*" "seen of angels," who are nearest to the throne of God, is fitly set by the side of "preached unto the Gentiles," who stand at the opposite pole, and are far off. And then the third duplicate is made up of the evident opposites, "believed on *in the world*," "received up *into glory.*" Thus, all through, the lights and shades are set over against each other by evident design. Moreover, you will perceive an equally plain parallelism, if you will read attentively. The first two stanzas deal with the revealing of the Lord Jesus;—he is manifest in the flesh, and he is yet more fully made manifest by being justified in the spirit. Then follows a making known of the Lord by sight to angels, and by hearing to the Gentiles; and, in the third pair of lines, there is a twofold reception,—the one by grace among men who believe, and the other into his actual glory in heaven. To all this add that pairs are also discernable in the first and last, the second and fourth, and the two middle lines. Just for an instant notice that the first clause of the series deals with Christ's descent, and the last with his ascent; the second and the fifth are both intensely spiritual; and the third and fourth have to do with the senses only. Thus you find another set of parallels, whose existence can hardly be a mere accident.

Note this, for it teaches us that our memories need to be helped and strengthened in every way, and so it is well to have condensed truth to carry about with us, and exceedingly advantageous to us to have it arranged for us in such a shape that we are likely to recollect it. The apostle has been led by the Spirit to give us goodly words, helping our infirmities; of this help we should gratefully avail ourselves to the utmost. If we be somewhat instructed in the word we have here an example of practical usefulness; we may for ourselves and for others, especially for the young, try to put truth into forms which will help it to retain its hold upon the memory.

I shall call my text a hexapla of essential truth, a sixfold mystery of godliness. You have six great points clearly set forth before you, and these constitute the main, the essential elements of our holy faith, which the church of God is for ever to set forth, and uphold to the end of time.

The apostle has said, "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." When he says "without controversy," I suppose he means that there ought to be no controversy about these facts, though controversies have arisen concerning them, and always will, since the most self-evident truth will always find self-evident fools to contradict it. He means that, in the church of God, at any rate, there is no question about these fundamentals. Outside of the church these statements are denied, but inside the house of God no one ever questions them for a moment; and he who does so is by that very act proven to have no part nor lot in the matter. Without controversy all Christians agree that these are truths, and also that they are no trifles, but involve a mystery, and a great mystery; that is to say, that they were things hidden in themseves, and so concealed that reason could not have found them out; and even now, though they be revealed, they concern matters so vast and so profound that none of us comprehend them to the full, and the best instructed scribe in the kingdom recognises in them infinite deeps which he cannot hope fully to explore. The facts are unquestioned by the church of God, and are without dispute, among the faithful, regarded as containing in their inner depths a world of weighty meaning, even the great mystery of godliness.

Have you ever noticed that there are six New Testament mysteries? There may be more, but these six are the chief. The first is the mystery of the incarnation, which is now before us; "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." The next is the mystery of the union of Christ with his church, of which we read, in Ephesians v. 31, 32, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be *joined* unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Thrice *blessed* union with Jesus, may our souls find their heaven *in thy holy mystery*.


"Oh teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That thou with us art truly one,
And we are one with thee!"
The third mystery
Paul refers in E
read, ye may
the mystery of the
sians iii. 4—6, the
and my know
calling of the Gentiles, to which
he says, "Whereby, when ye
in the mystery of Christ;

which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." Herein we have a joyful portion, for which we can never be too grateful. The fourth mystery concerns the Jews, and deals with the restoration of Israel, whom we ought to remember with abounding sympathy and brotherly love. Of this you will read in Romans xi. 25, 26: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." For a fifth mystery I would bid you remember the doctrine of the removal of corruption from the body, and of its resurrection as spoken of in the famous passage, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." And then, alas! to close the list, there is that mystery of iniquity which began to work so soon, and worketh yet more and more of evil.

Our text, then, is one of six mysteries, but it has this pre-eminence, that it is a *great* mystery, and is besides peculiarly *the* mystery. It is called "the mystery of godliness," because it most intimately concerns a godly life, because those who receive it in their hearts become thereby godly men; and because, moreover, it builds up its believers in godliness, and is to them a grand motive for the reverent love and holy fear of the Lord their God.

Let so much as we have already spoken stand for our preface, and let us now, by the Holy Spirit's aid, consider one by one the six branches of the mystery which is now before us

I. The first sentence is "GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH." I believe that our version is the correct one, but the fiercest battlings have been held over this sentence. It is asserted that the word *Theos* is a corruption for "*Os*;" so that, instead of reading "*God* was manifest in the flesh," we should read, "*who* was manifest in the flesh." There is very little occasion for fighting about this matter, for if the text does not say "God was manifest in the flesh," who does it say was manifest in the flesh? Either a man, or an angel, or a devil. Does it tell us that a man was manifest in the flesh? Assuredly that cannot be its teaching, for every man is manifest in the flesh, and there is no sense whatever in making such a statement concerning any mere man, and then calling it a mystery. Was it an angel, then? But what angel was ever manifest in the flesh? And if he were, would it be at all a mystery that he should be "seen of angels"? Is it a wonder for an angel to see an angel? Can it be that the devil was manifest in the flesh? If so, he has been "received up into glory," which, let us hope, is not the case. Well, if it was neither a man, nor an angel, nor a devil, who was manifest in the flesh, surely he must have been God; and so, if the word be not there, the sense must be there, or else nonsense. We believe that, if criticism should grind

the text in a mill, it would get out of it no more and no less than the sense expressed by our grand old version. God himself was manifest in the flesh. What a mystery is this! A mystery of mysteries! God the invisible was manifest; God the spiritual dwelt in flesh; God the infinite, uncontained, boundless, was manifest in the flesh. What infinite leagues our thought must traverse between Godhead self-existent, and, therefore, full of power and self-sufficiency, before we have descended to the far-down level of poor flesh, which is as grass at its best, and dust in its essence! Where find we a greater contrast than between God and flesh, and yet the two are blended in the incarnation of the Saviour. God was manifest in the flesh; truly God, not God humanised, but God as God. He was manifest in real flesh; not in manhood deified and made superhuman, but in actual flesh.

Oh joy! there sitteth in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!

For ever God, for ever man,
My Jesus shall endure;
And fix'd on Him, my hope remains
Eternally secure.

Matchless truth, let the church never fail to set it forth, for it is essential to the world's salvation that this doctrine of the incarnation be made fully known.

O my brethren, since it is "without controversy," let us not controvert but sit down and feed upon it. What a miracle of condescension is here, that God should manifest himself in flesh. It needs not so much to be preached upon as to be pondered in the heart. It needs that ye sit down in quiet, and consider how he who made you became like you, he who is your God became your brother man. He who is adored of angels once lay in a manger; he who feeds all living things hungered and was athirst; he who oversees all worlds as God, was, as a man, made to sleep, to suffer, and to die like yourselves. This is a statement not easily to be believed. If he had not been beheld by many witnesses, so that men handled him, looked upon him, and heard him speak, it were a thing not readily to be accepted that so divine a person should be manifest in flesh. It is a wonder of condescension!

And it is a marvel, too, of benediction, for God's manifestation in human flesh conveys a thousand blessings to us. Bethlehem's star is the morning star of hope to believers. Now man is nearest to God. Never was God manifest in angel nature, but he is manifest in flesh. Now, between poor puny man that is born of a woman, and the infinite God, there is a bond of union of the most wonderful kind. God and man in one person is the Lord Jesus Christ! This brings our manhood near to God, and by so doing it ennobles our nature, it lifts us up from the dunghill and sets us among princes; while at the same time it enriches us by endowing our manhood with all the glory of Christ Jesus in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Lift up your eyes, ye down-trodden sons of man! If ye be men ye have a brotherhood with Christ, and Christ is God. O ye who have begun to despise yourselves and think that ye are merely sent to be drudges

upon earth, and slaves of sin, lift up your heads and look for redemption in the Son of Man, who has broken the captives' bonds. If ye be believers in the Christ of God, then are ye also the children of God, and if children then heirs,—heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

What a fulness of consolation there is in this truth, as well as of benediction; for if the Son of God be man, then he understands me and will have a fellow feeling for me. He knows my unfitness to worship sometimes—he knows my tendencies to grow weary and dull—he knows my pains, my trials, and my griefs:

> "He knows what fierce temptations mean,
> For he has felt the same."

Man, truly man, yet sitting at the right hand of the Father, thou, O Saviour, art the delight of my soul. Is there not the richest comfort in this for you, the people of God?

And, withal, there is instruction, too, for God was manifest in the flesh; and if you desire to see God, you must see him in Christ Jesus. It does not say God was veiled in the flesh, though under certain aspects that might be true; but God was "*manifest* in the flesh." The brightness of the sun might put out our eyes if we gazed upon it, and we must needs look through dim glass, and then the sun is manifested to us; so the excessive glory of the infinite Godhead cannot be borne by our mind's eye till it comes into communication and union with the nature of man, and then God is manifest to us. My soul, never try to gaze upon an absolute God: the brightness will blind thine eye: even our God is a consuming fire! Ask not to see God in fire in the bush, nor God in lightning upon Mount Sinai; be satisfied to see God in the man Christ Jesus, for there God is manifested. Not all the glory of the sky, and of the sea, nor the wonders of creation or providence, can set forth the Deity as does the Son of Mary, who from the manger went to the cross, and from the cross to the tomb, and from the tomb to his eternal throne. Behold ye now the Lamb of God, for God is manifest in him! People of God, look ye nowhere else for God.

I shall leave the point when I have put a personal question. Have we each one of us seen God in Christ Jesus? Remember, this is essential to salvation. We speak not now that which is harsh or severe, we only speak that which is honest and true; if you rebel against it we still can say no less. Ye cannot be right anywhere unless ye are right about the person of the Lord Jesus. If you do not accept him as the Son of God he cannot be a Saviour to you, and without him for a Saviour you are as surely lost as you are born, whatever profession you may make. I trust we can say, many of us, "Yes, Jesus Christ is to us Lord, to the glory of God the Father, and we worship him, and obey him, putting all our trust in him, and rendering our adoration to him." If you be not now his worshippers, may the blessed Spirit bring you to Jesus, and not suffer you to attempt to go to the Father first, for the Lord Jesus hath told us "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." May you go to the throne of God by the way of the cross, for that is the only open way, and may you go by that road at once.

II. The second clause concerns our Lord's vindication by the Spirit. He who was "manifest in the flesh" was also "JUSTIFIED IN THE

SPIRIT." When our Lord came in human flesh and declared himself to be the Son of God there were many reasons why his statement would be doubted, for he came in such poverty, weakness, and disrepute. In any case, the appearance of God in flesh would need great proof, but the circumstances which surrounded our Saviour were such as to cast, especially in carnal minds, great doubt upon his pretensions; but our Lord, however the flesh might seem to cloud his claims, was "justified in the Spirit," which may mean, and perhaps does, that his spiritual nature as man was so elevated by his Godhead that it abundantly justified his claim to be the Son of God. What a spirit was his for purity and dignity! What nobility ever came near to his! What a mind was his, what wisdom dwelt in him! Even as a child he baffled Rabbis, and as a man he confounded all who would entrap him in his speech. Was there ever such teaching as his? Listen to him, and you feel that the spirit which flashes from those eyes and distils from those lips justifies his claim to be the Son of the Highest.

Hearken also to his words of command, when his Godhead glows through his humanity and proves him divine. He speaks, and it is done; he commands and it stands fast. At his bidding waves sleep and winds rest; pain flies, strength returns, health smiles, and death lives! Has not his spiritual nature, by deeds so astounding, fully justified him?

And see, dear friends, how he was justified—not only by his own spirit, which wrought beyond the reach and compass of all other spirits—but he was justified by the Holy Spirit which rested upon him without measure, and made his human spirit strong. It was this anointing which made him the chief of all prophets, teachers, and revealers of the mind of God. All who heard him confessed his unrivalled power, even when they resisted it. The Spirit of God bore witness in him—his words were full of unction; the Spirit of God bore witness with him—his words went to men's hearts. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ, and justified all his claims at the time of his baptism, when out of the excellent glory there appeared the form of a dove, and a voice cried out of heaven, "This is my beloved Son." That same Spirit justified him audibly again in his transfiguration; but silently, and yet more evidently, the seal of God was always on him, everywhere the Spirit witnessed to him. Only blind eyes, blinded by hate, refused to see the divine light which hung about his every word and act, as radiance enrobes a star. Above all, our Lord's claims were justified by the Spirit in his resurrection, when he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead." Nor less so when, after forty days, he was received up into glory, and the Spirit of God justified all that Christ had said, by coming down like a rushing mighty wind and cloven tongues of fire, and resting upon his disciples. If Christ had not risen from the dead he would have been a convicted impostor, and after his rising from the dead, if the Spirit of God had not been given, his claim would still have remained under a cloud! But now it is clear that "he hath ascended on high, and received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them;" that promised the scattering of the Spirit of God among men was his people, which our mighty Conqueror distributed among he entered upon the possession of his crown.

The Holy Spirit has justified Christ. This is a part of the testimony of the church—that Christ's claims are to be justified by the spirit of his teaching, and also by the Holy Spirit whose supernatural power will accompany the proclamation of the gospel. Now, let the church always stand to this. I am afraid we are on wrong ground when we begin to defend the gospel by mere reason. The true defence of the gospel is the spirit of Christ; Jesus is justified in the Spirit, and needs no other justification. O, brethren, if we exhibit the spirit of Christ we shall answer cavillers, and if the Spirit of God rests on the ministry of the church, cavillers will cease to cavil; they will see her glory and they will be ashamed. The Holy Ghost is our strength, our glory, the abiding witness that our great Leader is Lord and God.

Brethren, has the Holy Spirit ever justified Christ in your soul? He has come to save, has the Holy Spirit revealed him as your Saviour? He has come to blot out sin, has the Holy Ghost ever revealed him in all his power to pardon you? This is the sure vindication of Christ—your own personal experience of his preciousness and his power: if the Holy Ghost has given you that, none can confound you, but if you have it not you lack the one thing needful. God grant you may not lack it long!

III. The third clause of our hexapla is, "SEEN OF ANGELS." This is an important point, for angels had waited to see the Lord, patiently gazing on the mercy-seat. There had been rumours in heaven of this mystery of the manifold wisdom of God, but they had not understood it; and it is now in Christ that the mystery of incarnate God has been revealed to them. If I may so say, the brightness of the Godhead had confounded even the angels; they were not able to see God, but when God came and manifested himself in the flesh, then God was seen of angels. The Godhead was seen in Christ by angels, as they had never seen it before. They had beheld the attribute of justice, they had seen the attribute of power, they had marked the attribute of wisdom, and seen the prerogative of sovereignty; but never had angels seen love, and condescension, and tenderness, and pity, in God as they saw these things resplendent in the person and the life of Christ. They were astounded to think that God was such a one. They knew him to be thrice holy, for they had chanted "Holy, holy, holy," in their perpetual sanctus; but they did not know him to be love—essential love—as they knew it when they saw that "he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." The angels, seeing God thus manifest in flesh, ministered to him; they watched around the manger; they were messengers to his foster-parent to warn him of intended evil to the child; and they waited on the Redeemer in the desert of his temptation. One of their number strengthened him in the garden, another rolled away the stone from his grave, while others sat at the head and foot of the sepulchre where Jesus had lain. I doubt not it is true as we sang just now:—

> "They brought his chariot from above,
> To bear him to his throne;
> Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,
> 'The glorious work is done.'"

Jesus was all along seen of angels, and this is one reason why they sing so sweetly of him—why they tune their notes so heartily to the

song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain;" for they saw him live, and die, saw him labour and suffer; and therefore is their song so vivid and so full of adoration. "Thou wast slain," say they, though they cannot add, "and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." Now the joy of this truth lies here: it brings the angel host so near to us, for they saw Jesus and waited on him, and we see him, and therefore our eyes and the angels' eyes meet upon the person of Christ. We have one common love, one common Lord; and now the ministering spirits that waited upon him are ready to wait upon us. They love the members for the sake of the Head. Beloved, we rejoice this day to know that Christ is head of angels and principalities and powers, as well as head of his church; and so in him broken unity is restored, and the household of God is one in him. Angelic eyes beheld and loved; they love on still, and wonder yet. Fair spirits, charmed with the beauty of our Bridegroom, ye rejoice with us, and make it your delight to swell his train!

One question, and we leave the point. Have you ever seen Jesus? He was seen of angels. Has your eye ever seen him—your inner, spiritual eye? If not, the Lord help you this morning to look unto him and be saved! It is nothing that he was seen of angels, unless he be seen of me also, even as of one born out of due time. O! to see him as my Saviour, my all, and rest in him! This is the main business. May God grant us that gladness!

IV. Briefly, the fourth part of the great mystery does not look, at first sight, to be at all mysterious. There is much of mystery in the facts that God was "manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, and seen of angels;" but the next appears very common-place—"PREACHED UNTO THE GENTILES." Yet it is not without a marvel: those who reflect will see a great mystery of grace in it. Until Christ came, nothing was "preached to the Gentiles." They were accounted dogs, and few were the crumbs that fell to them from the master's table; but after our Lord had ascended on high he was proclaimed to the Gentiles. To a Jew especially this would seem a very strange thing. The Jew thought that if the Gentile perished, it was but a matter of course; but for the Gentiles to be visited with the gospel was strange indeed. That God should work effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision was to them readily a matter of faith, but that the same should be equally mighty in Paul towards the Gentiles was incredible yet true. Well, blessed be God, you and I are partakers in this mystery, for we have heard and believed the love which God hath toward us. We are Gentiles also, but unto us has the gospel been preached as well as unto the ancient people; yea, and we have been more highly favoured than they, for at this day, more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife. God hath multiplied the seed of Abraham after the Spirit among the Gentiles, whereas the seed of Abraham after the flesh have, in these times, rejected the Saviour. *Rejoice then, in the mystery, that Christ is preached among the Gentiles.* Mark you, preached! For he is to be set forth in that manner. The church is ever uncontroverted mystery, that the setting forth of Christ to the Gentiles is to be by preaching, and not by any other means of man's devising. Suppose I could take my

pencil now, and draw the Saviour with such matchless skill, that a Raffaelle or a Titian could not rival me: God has never ordained that so Christ should be set forth to the Gentiles. Or, suppose I should perform the ceremony of the mass with all the exactness, and with all the gorgeousness which the church of Rome would require; such a setting forth of Christ among the Gentiles would not be according to the divine mystery. Christ is to be *preached* among the Gentiles: the appointed way of manifesting the incarnate God to the sons of men is by preaching—the church must always maintain this. The strongest castle of the walls of Zion for offence and defence must ever be the pulpit. God is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. I hate to see, as I do sometimes, in certain modern buildings, the pulpit stuck in the corner, and the altar in the most conspicuous place. The altar of sacrifice, indeed, the place of defilement and remembrance of sin, how comes that to be in the holy place at all? God has never ordained it to be there. Where in Holy Scripture have we mention of a material altar in the assemblies of believers? Our only altar is the spiritual altar of our Lord's person, whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle of outward forms of rites and ceremonies. Altars belong to Jews and heathens, and even they never bow before them; none but your Popish idolaters have fallen so low as that. The most prominent agency in the church of God is the preaching of Christ—this is the trumpet of heaven and the battering-ram of hell! By this door salvation comes, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, and how shall they hear without a preacher? God's way of creating faith in men's hearts is not by pictures, music, or symbols, but by the hearing of the word of God. This may seem a strange thing, and strange let it seem, for it is a mystery, and a great mystery, but a fact beyond all controversy; for ever let the church maintain that Christ is to be preached unto the Gentiles. A part of the greatness of the mystery lies in the persons who preached the gospel. It was a strange thing that Jesus should be preached unto the Gentiles by unlearned and ignorant men. One of the apostles, it is true, was of another class, but he declares that he never preached with excellency of speech, but in all simplicity he laid bare the mystery of God in plain language. It was wonderful that Christ should be preached unto the Gentiles so rapidly. It was but the other day the hundred and twenty were in the upper room, and within a few years there was no part of the civilized globe which had not heard the name of Jesus; they had penetrated Scythia, they had subdued the barbarians, their only weapon being the cross; they had triumphed at Athens, in the stronghold of classic learning; they had passed into Rome, and set up the cross amidst the luxurious vices of the capital. No place was untrodden by the Christian missionary, and no place was unaffected by the power of the gospel which he preached. This is a great mystery: the Lord repeat the mystery again and again! O that preaching might once again be recognised to be God's power unto salvation, and used everywhere—in the church, in the lecture hall, in the street—in foreign lands and at home; for the voice of truth in the preaching of Jesus is the great power of God.

One question here, and we leave it—Have you reverently heard the gospel? for there goes with the declaration that God saves through preaching, the warning, "Take heed how ye hear," for if God waits to bless by hearing, woe unto the men who hear inattentively and disrespectfully, woe unto the hearers only who are not doers of the word! A responsibility goes with hearing, and God grant that you may be obedient hearers, so that we who preach may give a good account of you at the last, that our ministry may not have been in vain, but may have been to you the voice of God to your salvation.

V. And now the fifth part of the mystery is a very remarkable one: like that which preceded, it does not appear to be mysterious on the surface, but it is so: "BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD." This is the most glorious of all the six points, this wonderful fact that Jesus is "believed on in the world." Why, when the humble preachers went out first to tell of Jesus, their story was so strange you could not imagine that any would believe it. And then the doctrines that they taught were so contrary to all the prejudices of flesh and blood, so humbling to human pride, so insulting to all our self-esteem, that it was not probable that men would accept them. And the world, too, what a world it was! It was steeped up to its throat in cruelty, in vice, in luxury, in sins infamous and unmentionable, and was it likely that a pure Saviour, with a perfect doctrine like his, would find followers? But he did; he was "believed on in the world." Why, I think the first preachers must have been ready to leap for joy when they found that men believed them. If I had been Peter, I should scarce have slept for joy for many a night if I had found three thousand willing to believe my testimony, and willing to be baptised into Christ! And Paul—oh, methinks, with all his sorrows, he must have been a very happy man—must have been struck with wonder to see that though he went into idolatrous lands to tell this new, and strange, and incredible story, yet in every place there were found men or women who received it joyfully.

Mark well that the church is bound to maintain this mystery, that it is by believing in Christ that the efficacy of his sacrifice comes to men. The mystery is not that Christ is served in the world, that is not put here; not that Christ is worshipped in the world, that is not the first point—those things will be sure to follow: but the vital mystery is that Christ is "believed on in the world," that is to say, trusted as the Saviour. Men leave all other trusts, and trust in him; they give up their self-righteousness, they leave their vaunted sacraments, they forsake all ways and modes of self-salvation, and come and trust in Christ,—this is the great mystery. "Well," says one, "I do not see that there is a mystery in it." Have you ever believed in Jesus yourself, beloved friend? If you have, you will say "this is the finger of God." *Belief in Jesus* is as great a work of divine power as the making of *this globe*. One of the visitors to this place lately said, "I am *willing to* be *a believer*, if the preacher can persuade me." Very likely, *but no preacher can create* true faith—it needs a mightier *power than the preacher's*, even the power of the Holy Ghost. God *gives to his* [illegible] *unbelief. Faith* [illegible] *the blessing of faith*, and others wilfully remain in *be attained by* [illegible] *simple as it is supernatural*, divine, and not to *human aid, nor human* eloquence; they who have it

know that it is a blessed mystery, this believing on Jesus Christ in the world.

Have you this faith? Do you believe in Jesus? Everything else in my text leads up to this. If he be manifest in the flesh what is that unless I believe in him? What if he be justified in the Spirit. What is that unless faith in him justifies me? What if he be seen of angels, how does that help me unless I see him too? And even if he be preached among the Gentiles, that does but involve greater guilt upon my soul if, after hearing, I have not believed in him? O dear hearers, I may not long speak to you, and every time that I am kept away from addressing you I feel a deep anxiety that by some means my preaching may be made effectual to your salvation. Many of you have believed in my Lord—this is my comfort; but, on the other hand, how many there are who still hear, and hear, and hear, and that is all. How long halt ye? How long cause ye us to labour for nought? No one is so worth trusting as the Saviour is, and nothing is so true as that he came to save sinners.

VI. The last point of the church's witness is that Jesus was "RECEIVED UP INTO GLORY." Only this word about it: he was so received because his work is finished. He would never have gone into his glory if he had not finished all his toil. He would have accepted no reward had he not fully earned it. My soul, believe thou that Christ is received up into glory; that will let thee know that thou art resting in a finished work, an atonement which has put away all sin, a satisfaction which has made all believers accepted in the Beloved. He has gone into glory, thus he is personally rewarded; and moreover, he has thus representatively taken possession of all that he has purchased. Is Christ in glory? then the believer is in glory, not literally but in his covenant Head. What Christ takes possession of he claims in our name: "I go to prepare a place for you." O ye who sorrow over the present, rejoice also; for even now at this moment heaven is yours,—your Jesus has taken possession in your name.

And oh, it is joyous to know that our great Lord is eternally exalted! If he were not exalted what comfort could we have? He is received up into glory! Men say he is not God—they cannot hurt him, for he is received up into glory! They revile his gospel—they cannot dim the lustre of his crown, he is received up into glory! They would fain slay his people if they could, but *he* is received up into glory! They struggle and they strive against his cause, and would fain overthrow it; but O, what matters it, he is everlastingly exalted, and he will shortly come—that same Jesus who was received into glory shall so come, in like manner as he was seen to go up into heaven. Here are great wells of comfort. He has to his glory gone, and has taken to himself his great power; but every hour is bringing nearer the time when he shall lay bare his sword in the midst of his foes, and shall unveil his face in the midst of his friends. Let us rejoice in him this day, and go our way to bear, with all the church of the living God, the six-fold testimony of our text concerning our precious Saviour. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Luke ii. 1—32.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ESSENCE OF SIMPLICITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 29TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?"—John ix. 35, 36.

THIS text is from the story of the blind man to whom Jesus had given sight. His narrative of the cure provoked the anger of the Jews and their rulers; and, as the man could not be brought to see with them that one who had opened his eyes could also be a bad man, they cast him out of their assembly, and by that act signified to him that he would be, or already was, cast out of the Jewish Church, set aside from the synagogue, and made the victim of the greater excommunication. This was one of the most fearful calamities that could befall a Jew, and I do not doubt but what the man considered it to be so. Now, it is not at all likely that any person here is feeling the same trouble, but many may be suffering from something similar. It may be that you have excommunicated yourselves. Within the court of your own bosom conscience has held a solemn court, and pronounced upon you a sentence which continually rings in your ears. You scarcely dare mingle with those who assemble in the house of God, for you feel yourselves unworthy to be among them. Up till lately you were upon the best of terms with yourselves, and reckoned that all was right with God. You hoped that you stood on as good a footing, at any rate, as other men, and perhaps were somewhat better than many around you; but now a process of enlightenment has come over your mind—practices have been seen to be seriously evil which before were regarded as trifles, and sin itself has worn another aspect than any which it bore in former times. Does such a person stand here this morning? Then let me assure him that his state of mind is well known to me, for I knew its horrors by the space of many months together. I, too, felt that I was cut off from the congregation of the hopeful, and must not hope for mercy from God. I dared not lift so much as mine eyes towards heaven, but complained to the Lord as Jonah did—"I am shut out of thy sight." Hence with

brotherly sympathy I speak to any man who reckons himself a castaway, shut out from the house of the Lord.

The man in the narrative, most happily for him, at the time when the sentence began to cast its gloom over him, was met by the Lord Jesus Christ, who at once proceeded to afford him the necessary cordial. Christ has come as the consolation of Israel, and where he finds that men are burdened in spirit he commences his gracious work: but, observe, he brings but one cordial, and prescribes but one way by which its efficacy can be realised. He spoke to the oppressed man concerning the Son of God and personal faith in him, for this is the master-consolation for broken hearts, this is the surest and best means of bringing joy to souls which sit in the dungeons of despondency. Our Lord began by saying to the cast-out one, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Now, if any here present are in the state which I have thus hurriedly sketched, feeling themselves guilty before God, with spirits ill at ease, with hearts alarmed at coming and deserved judgment, I would come in Christ's name to them this morning with words of comfort, but they will be no other than those which Jesus uttered of old. I have nothing to speak to you by way of comfort but concerning the Son of God, and concerning him only, by demanding that ye believe on him, for only as you receive him by faith will he be to you a relief from sorrow. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus shall not be ashamed, but without faith you are without salvation.

We shall this morning labour to bring you all to the point in hand. There shall be between the doctrine of the gospel and your soul this morning, O thou who art not yet a believer, a direct encounter. Thou shalt come up this morning and face the gospel, whether thou spurn it or accept it. Thou shalt know, if the plainest words can tell it thee, that if thou believest in Christ Jesus thou shalt be saved, and it shall be put to thee whether thou wilt do this or not, and thou shalt either believe on the Son of God or incur anew the sin of putting from thee the only name given under heaven among men whereby thou canst be saved. I say thou shalt be brought to this if words can bring thee to it, and then I must leave the work of deciding you in the hands of God the Holy Ghost. I entreat you who love the Lord, and have prevalence in prayer, to aid me with your supplications, that the result of bringing the sinner face to face with the gospel may be that he may decide to believe in Jesus, that faith may be given him, that the Son of God may become the object of his soul's confidence, and that in no case the hearer may be left to continue in unbelief, and to reject the Son of God. You have seen at the mouth of the coal pits how the full wagons as they run down the incline draw the empty ones up to the pit's mouth that they also may be filled: I would to God that you who have grace may exert the power God has given you with himself; and so by prevalent intercession you may draw others to the Saviour. While we are preaching do you be praying, and God will work by us both. Look upon the unsaved around you with an eye of pity, then look to Christ, your exalted Saviour, with the eye of faith, and say to him, "Jesu, thou who hast redeemed myriads by thy blood, now work by thine eternal Spirit, and redeem also by power. Let the Spirit that rested on thine own ministry, the Spirit that was

with thy servants at Pentecost, the Spirit that has converted us also to thy truth, work mightily among the congregation this morning, that all these may be led to obey thee. When thy cross is lifted high, let it bring life to the dead throughout the camp, and be to the awakened a lighthouse of safety, to the despairing a pillar of hope."

I. The run of our discourse this morning being solemnly practical, we shall, in the most distinct manner, lay down and define THE MATTER IN HAND. With thee, my anxious friend, the greatest and weightiest business that can concern thee is that thou find salvation. Thou hast it not at present, thy conscience tells thee that; and though thou art well aware that thou must obtain it, or be for ever lost, yet thou hast as yet but small prospect of ever finding it. Thou hast sinned, and punishment awaits thee; neither canst thou escape! The point above all points with thee is that thou be saved, and if thou be really awakened thou desirest to be saved from sin as well as from its punishment; thou wouldst not only escape from the consequences of doing wrong, but from the propensity to do wrong; from the constant power and defilement of past sin, and from the tendency to sin again. Thou desirest also to be forgiven, and by forgiveness to be set clear from the anger of a justly offended God, and to be rendered acceptable to the Most High; and if thou be in thy right mind thou desirest that all this should be done really and truly, not in pretence or fiction, but in deed and in truth. God forbid that thou shouldst ever be content with the name of being saved, with an external and professional salvation of outward rites and ceremonies, while your heart remains unpurified and your nature uncleansed. In some other departments we may be deceived and not be very great losers, but in soul matters we must make all things sure; for if we are deceived there, it is all over with us indeed. Let me be cheated with base metal instead of gold, if you will, but not with falsehoods in the place of saving truth, or deceptive notions in lieu of gracious operations. Let me be deceived as to the food I eat, and find every morsel of it adulterated, if so it must be; but not in the life-bread eternal, which my soul craves after. Be true to my soul, if all else be a lie!

Do you, my hearer, desire salvation from the power and guilt of sin, and do you desire it to be thorough and real? Do you not also long for it *now*? If God has at all quickened you, you long to be saved at once, and tremble at the idea of delay. Sin is bitter to you *now*, it is a present plague. The matter before us now is present salvation, personal salvation to be realised for your own self. If there be such a thing as looking up to the smiling face of a reconciled Father in heaven, you desire to enjoy it *now*: if it be possible for the load of sin to be rolled from off a mortal's shoulders for ever, you desire to be quit of that burden at this instant: if there be, indeed, a fountain in which, if a man be washed, every stain shall disappear, you long to plunge beneath its cleansing flood at once, and be made whiter than the driven snow. If your soul is so far awakened I bless God indeed, for there is nothing beneath the sun—and, indeed, there is nothing above it—that can rival in importance your soul's salvation.

Now the matter which I must press upon you is this. If you are ever to be saved, God has declared that salvation must come to you as

a gift of his grace, as an act of his free favour, and can only be received by you through your believing in his Son. As Christ consoled the man in the temple by saying to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" so to-day there is no consolation, much less salvation for thee, except through believing in God's own Son. A hundred times have you heard the story of God's only begotten Son, who is the lover of men's souls; but we must tell it you yet again. God will not save men on the ground of their merits; indeed, if they have any merits they do not require saving. If God owes you anything, produce the account and you shall have it. If there be any obligations on God's part towards you, say what they are, and if they can be proved to exist, God will never give you less than you can justly claim. Alas! my friend, if you are lodged where you deserve to be, where will it be but in the pit of hell? It were well for you then to have done with all claims and demands. God will only save you as a guilty person who deserves to be destroyed, but whom he saves becauses he chooses to save him—because he resolves to manifest in him the abundance of his mercy. "By grace are ye saved," is the immutable purpose of heaven; and it is further decreed, that this grace shall be received by men through the channel of faith, and by that channel only. God will save only those who trust in his Son. Jesus Christ the Lord came into this world and took upon himself our nature, as we taught you last Sabbath Day, and being found in fashion as a man, he took the transgressor's place; the transgressions of his people were numbered upon him, imputed to him, charged to his account, and he suffered for them as if they had been his own sins. He was scourged, tormented, crucified, and slain; the stripes he bore were the chastisments due to human sin, and the death he endured was the death threatened to transgressors; and now, whosoever will trust in Jesus shall participate in the result of all the Redeemer's substitutionary agonies, and the case shall stand thus—the sufferings of Christ shall be instead of the believer's suffering, and the merits of Christ shall be instead of the obedience which man ought to have rendered. Faith in Jesus makes us righteous through the righteousness of another; it causes us to be accepted in the Beloved, perfect in Christ Jesus. As by the first Adam we fell, so by the second Adam we rise again. Now the way to partake in the benefits of the death of the Lord Jesus is simply by believing in him. Here let it be understood that believing in Jesus is not a mysterious and complex action. It does not require a week to explain what faith is. Faith believes what God has revealed concerning Christ, and it therefore trusts in Christ as the divinely-appointed Saviour. I believe that Jesus was God's Son, that God sent him into the world to save sinners, that to do so he became a substitute to justice for all those who trust him, and, as I trust him, I know that he was my substitute and that I am clear before God. Since Jesus died for me, God's justice cannot put me to eternal death for whom Jesus my substitute has died; God's truth cannot demand a second time the debt which has already been fully paid on my behalf. The *rationale* of the whole thing is as plain as possible, and whoever in this world, old or young, Jew or Gentile, literate or illiterate, rich or poor, debauched or moral, will trust in Jesus shall be saved—nay he is saved

the moment he does so; but whosoever of woman born refuses to trust in Jesus is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God. Let a man's character be what it may, if in that character there be no faith, he is a lost soul; but on the other hand, let that character have been what it may, if now he cometh to the cross and believeth in Jesus, he beginneth from that moment a new life; God will give to him all the graces and excellencies of character which will adorn his faith, and his faith shall save him. Trusting in Jesus, believing in Jesus, that is the matter. I want to bring my hammer down upon this anvil at every stroke, and if the Lord will be pleased to place before me some heart that he has melted in the furnace of conviction, the strokes will tell, if the Eternal God will lay-to his almighty arm and smite with energy divine. If any soul be but brought to faith in Jesus the work is done; to believe in the Son of God is the point, and nothing else.

II. This being the matter in hand, we will make an advance, in the second place, to notice that there is A QUESTION IN OUR TEXT WHICH INVOLVES THE WHOLE BASIS OF FAITH. The man said to Jesus, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" This man all through the narrative proves himself to be a very shrewd fellow. I do not know that holy Scripture gives us an instance of a more common-sense man than this man whose eyes were opened; and so, when he is told that he must believe in the Son of God, he comes to the point at once, and says, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" as if that was all he wanted to know—"Who is he?" and then the faith would surely come. When a soul is seeking faith, this question is the main point; the hinge of the whole matter lies there. This man did not say, "Lord, who am I that I should believe?"—not at all; that would have been wide of the point. If I read a story in the newspapers, about the truthfulness of which there is a question, I do not begin asking what my own character is, as though that had anything to do with it, but I ask who the authority for the story may be. I do not look within, but I look to the person claiming belief. The story is true or not, whatever I may be. My character does not concern the truth or falsehood of the statement, I must enquire into the statement itself. So this man did not make any remarks about what he might have been or might still be, but he hung the issue on this nail—"Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" So now, dear hearer, all the arguments for thy faith lie within the compass of that question, "Who is he, Lord, that I should believe in him?" Thou needest not say, "Who am I that I should believe? I have lived a life that has been defiled with sin; I have gone from one transgression to another; I have resisted conscience; I have stood out against the gospel; I have defiled myself by sins against light and knowledge." It mattereth not. There thou standest, with all thy defilement taken for granted, and God says to thee, "Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." That is the saving matter; that, and nothing more nor less. Wilt thou believe in the Lord Jesus or not? What thou art is nothing to the point. If God's witness be true, it is true whether thou be black or white, whether thou be a big sinner or a little sinner; and if it be false it will not be any the truer, whether you be good or bad, worthy or

unworthy. If Jesus be able to save he ought to be trusted; and if he be not able none ought to rely upon him—the whole question turns on that.

Neither raise any quibbles as to your present condition. You say, "But I at this moment feel myself so hard of heart; I cannot weep as some can; repentance is hid from my eyes; prayer is heavy, groaning work with me; even while I am listening to the gospel this morning my attention is not riveted as it ought to be upon the truth which I know to be vital; I am destitute of every good point; I am empty of everything that can recommend me to mercy." I answer, what of that? Suppose I tell a man that the sum of ten thousand pounds has been left him in a will, is it anything to the point if he shows me his rags, his empty cupboard, and his wretched bed? Does his poverty make me a liar? Why does the man introduce such extraneous matter into the good news? Either it is true or it is not; his condition has nothing to do with the truth or falsehood of my declaration. If the man were wrapped in scarlet and fine linen, that would not make my statement any the truer; and if the dogs lick him as they did Lazarus, that does not give him a right to deny my truthfulness when I tell him a fact. So, O sinner, your condition has nothing to do with the question whether Jesus is to be trusted or not. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Will you believe in him? Will you trust the Lord Jesus? If you desire to trust him the subject for enquiry is, "Is he worth trusting?" But it is a question far away from the point to say, "I am this," or "I am that." Is not this so? I appeal to your own common sense.

"But still, as to the future," says one; "I might go back to my old sins. I cannot trust myself, I have made some reformations before, and they have been but poor ventures; my ship has gone out to sea, and foundered in the first gale; I cannot expect with such temptations as will await me, that I shall bear up and enter heaven." Now, what has the question of believing in Jesus to do with thy good resolutions, or thy miserable failures? Whosoever trusts Christ shall be saved. If thou be lost trusting him in the future, God's word will not be true. The question is, Canst thou trust Christ? and that turns on that other "is he worthy to be trusted?" No other question can be admitted for a single moment. The case is something like that of a man in yonder sea; his ship is wrecked; she is breaking to pieces; her decks have been swept; he barely retains his hold on a floating spar. See! the life-boat comes up close to his side, and is ready to take him on board. Now, if there be a question in that man's mind about getting into that life-boat in order to be saved, the only rational one that I can conceive is, "Will the boat carry me to shore? Is she sea-worthy? Will she outlive the breakers? Can she reach the land safely?" You cannot conceive the poor fellow's saying, "I quiver too much with ague to be rescued by that boat," or "The sea has washed the last rag from off my back, the boat will not suit me," or "Another time I may be wrecked on the coast of Africa, and there may be a life-boat." No, no. Man alive, there is the boat! Is she sea-worthy? That is the question. If so, get into her. If Christ be not worth trusting, do not trust him;

and if he be worthy of all confidence, then have done with idle questions and cast yourself upon him. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John v. 9—12).

Still, we will keep to this point—Jesus is worth trusting, worthy of the sinner's unwavering faith. He is worth trusting, O sinner, because first of all *he* on whom thou art bidden to rely this day by the command of the gospel, *is God himself.* Thou hast offended God, and it is God who came into the world to save sinners. Against Christ thy sins were launched as arrows from a bow, but he against whom those bolts were shot has come in the fulness of his power and the infinity of his mercy to save them that believe. Canst thou not trust thyself in almighty hands—almighty to save? Is anything impossible with God? An angel could not save thee, but surely God himself can? How canst thou limit the Holy one of Israel? How canst thou set bounds to boundless love, or limits to limitless grace? If Jesus were man and not God, unbelief would have good excuse; but if the Saviour be divine, where can distrust find a cloak for itself?

I feel this morning as if I could not help believing in Christ now that I know him to be divine. Faith has grown to be a necessary act of my mind. Save me! Who shall persuade me that he cannot? Come forth ye devils with your arguments and plead with me, and ye cannot inject a doubt into my soul while I know him to be God; he can shake the heavens when he pleases and make the earth to tremble; he bears up the universe upon his shoulders; cannot he save my poor soul? Ay, that he can. "Who is he that I might believe on him?" He is divine, and therefore I believe.

But next, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the sinner is bidden to trust, is *commissioned by God to save.* He came into the world as a Saviour, not alone on his own account, but as Messiah sent of God. He has the full concurrence of the sacred Trinity. It is the will of the Father, it is the will of the Holy Spirit, as well as the will of the Son, that whosoever believeth in Jesus should be saved. He was anointed of the Lord for his peculiar work. Now, I feel as if this was a special ground for trust in him. If Christ were an amateur Saviour who had taken up the trade of saving on his own account, there might be a question; but if God has divinely commissioned him to save, O soul, why canst thou doubt any more? Warranted of God, authorised of the Eternal, O heart, rest thou in him.

Then, mark, the Lord Jesus Christ *has actually done all that is necessary for him to do* for the salvation of all who trust him. Years ago, before Jesus Christ came into the world, if I had been sent to preach the gospel, I must have cried "Jesus will take upon him the sins of believers, and lay down his life for his church," but now I have a more encouraging message; Jesus has carried his people's sins away for ever, he has offered on their behalf all that was required to make

an end of their transgressions. Whatever was demanded by the justice of God as a recompense for the injured honour of the law he has rendered. The equivalent for all the sufferings of all the elect in hell for ever Christ has suffered to the utmost: everything that was necessary that God might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth, Christ has endured. The cup of vengeance is not full, and to be drained; it is empty, and turned bottom upwards, Jesus has drank it dry. The labours needful for our redemption, superlatively greater than the labours of Hercules, have all been accomplished. Christ has gone into the grave, has gone out of the grave, and gone up to his glory. He has entered heaven because his work is done; and now he sits down at the right hand of the Father in the posture of rest and honour, because he has perfected for ever all those who put their trust in him. Now, soul, how canst thou refuse to believe in Jesus? To me the argument seems impossible to be resisted. If it be so, that Christ hath died, the just for the unjust, and that all who trust him shall be saved, I will also trust him, and I shall find peace through his blood.

Moreover, soul, the point we trust God's grace is bringing thee to is this—Jesus deserves to be trusted, and trust him we will—for *he is full of power to save*, for he is now upon the throne, and all power is given him in heaven and in earth. He is full of power to save we know, because he is saving souls every day. Some of us are the living witnesses that he can forgive sin, for we are pardoned, accepted, and renewed in heart; and the only way in which we obtained those boons was this—we trusted him, we did nothing else but trust him. If any soul here that believes in Jesus should perish, I must perish with him. I sail in that boat, and if it sinks I have no other to fly to. I avow before you all that I have no other confidence; I have not so much as the shred of a reliance in any sacrament I have undergone or enjoyed, in any sermon I have ever preached, in any prayer I have ever prayed, in any communion with God I have ever known. My hope lies in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; and I shake off as though it were a viper, into the fire, as a deadly thing only fit to be burned, all pretence of relying on anything I may be, or can be, or ever shall be, or do. "None but Jesus,"—this is the settled pillar upon which we must build; it will bear us up, but nothing else can. Now, since by the authority of infallible Scripture, we know that Jesus has this power, wherefore is it that souls seeking rest do not obey the command, and rest themselves freely upon him. This is the climax of human depravity, that it rejects the witness of God himself, and chooses to perish in unbelief.

Moreover, remember also that Jesus Christ this morning is by no means unwilling to save sinners, but on the contrary, he delights to do it. You have never to drag mercy out of Christ, as money from a miser, but it flows freely from him, like the stream from the fountain, or the sunlight from the sun. If he can be happier, he is made happier by giving of his mercy to the undeserving. When a poor wretch who only deserves hell, comes to him, and he says, "I have blotted out thy sins," it is joy to Christ's heart to do it. When a poor blasphemer bows his knee, and says, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," it makes Christ's heart glad to say, "Thy blasphemies are forgiven: I suffered for them

on the tree." When a poor little child, by her bedside, cries, "Gentle Jesus, teach a little child to pray, and forgive the sins which I have done;" the Saviour loves to say, "Suffer these little children to come to me, for this also is a part of my recompense for the wounds I endured in my hands, my feet, and my side." When any of you come to him and confess your transgressions and trust yourselves in his hands, it will be a new heaven to him; it will put new stars into his ever bright and lustrous crown; it will make him see of the travail of his soul and give him satisfaction. Have we not here also arguments to prove that Jesus is worthy to be trusted?

III. This leads us in the third place to say, by all these answers to the question,—"Who is he?" EVERY SINNER IN THIS TABERNACLE IS SHUT UP THIS MORNING TO THE ALTERNATIVE OF FAITH OR UNBELIEF. You are shut up either to trust in Christ, in whom God commands you to trust, or to refuse to trust him. I am not sent to preach to some of you this morning, but to every one who has ears to hear. I have never learned to preach a restricted gospel to a part of a congregation; the commission received by every true minister of Christ is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." As you are all creatures, the gospel is hereby preached to all of you; sensible or insensible, spiritually dead or spiritually alive, so long as you are able to hear the gospel, one message comes to you all out of the excellent glory. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But I know what will be your course of action unless the Spirit of God prevent it. Many of you will try to decline the alternative between believing and not believing, which I have put so nakedly before you. You will not like to say, "I will not trust Christ," and yet you will not trust in him. What, then, will you do? Why, you will ring the changes on the old bells, "But I am such a sinner. I am so unworthy!" I have already shown that the plea is not relevant and ought not to be thrust into the business. The question is one and indivisible, "Wilt thou believe on the Son of God?" Why then do you raise another question about yourself which has nothing to do with it. Yet I will take you on your own ground and answer you. Granted that you are a special and abominable sinner: then of all men in the world you are the man who should trust Christ, because it is written, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." You have been a drunkard, a fornicator, an adulterer, a thief, in fact, a devil of a man; well then, you have been a sinner;—that is all it comes to, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; therefore instead of being shut out by your character, you are shut in by it. You are the sort of man that Christ came to save. You cannot run away and say, "He did not come to save me because I am not a sinner." You dare not do that.

Very likely you will turn round upon me and say, "My reason for unbelief is that I do not feel as I should." I again say the plea ought never to be urged. Because I feel a pain in my foot this morning, is that a reason why I should not trust in an honest man, or believe a statement which comes to me upon good authority. I will, however,

take you on your own ground. You are so sinful that you are, in all respects, undeserving; well, then, Jesus came to save his people from their sins. Clearly, you are one of the very sort of persons whom he came to save, for you are full of sins. His salvation is all of grace, and since you have no good thing about you whatsoever, you are a most fit case for mercy, free mercy, great mercy! Salvation, all of grace, exactly suits you. You are an empty vessel, then it is clear you want to be filled; you are a filthy vessel, then you need washing; and Jesus proposes both to cleanse and fill. His overtures are exactly adapted to your circumstances. You are the very man for grace to bless.

"Ah, but," says another, "I feel myself lost, utterly lost." What! are we first to do battle with some of you because you feel too little, and then with others because they feel too much; then we must come back to our one fixed point, and remind you again that both excuses are wide of the mark, and that the one point is—will you, or will you not, believe in the Lord Jesus, whom God has set forth to be the Saviour of men? But still if you are crushed with sorrowful feelings, there are special reasons for your attending to the gospel call, since some invitations are especially directed to you, such as, "Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters," and "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." If there are special messages of grace for you who are somewhat awakened to a sense of need, then I entreat you, hasten to accept the testimony of God that so your souls may live.

The one question for every unconverted sinner here is, Wilt thou believe on Jesus Christ? But I hear you saying, "Well, I must do better in the future; I think after all I may perhaps, by some exertions of my own, get into a better condition." How can you hope so? Have you not made a pretty mess of it up till now? You had better give up the vain attempt. If you have done so badly in the past, you have little encouragement to try the future. Let despair drive you to faith. The worst of your conduct is you are going clean contrary to God's plan. God says, "I will not save you on the ground of merit, for you have none." That is really a gracious declaration of his, for it only shuts out false hopes, since "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Now, if you say, "I will seek salvation on the ground of works," you are flying in God's face. Is this wise? I should far rather recommend you to accept at once what he so freely gives. Follow the course of action adopted by a person the other day in dealing with another. He wanted to purchase something of his brother. His brother had asked him a certain amount for it, and he said, "I will give you half." "No," said the brother, "sooner than take so small a price I will give it to you." "Thank you; I will have it," was the immediate reply. That is what I would have you do. Do not offer your petty price to God, when he is ready to give the blessing without money and without price! I never knew such fools as men are about the things of God. If they can get a good thing for nothing, all the world over they will have it without pressing, and yet they rebel against free grace. Years ago we paid twenty millions to set free the slaves in Jamaica, but before the bill was carried there were no end of objections raised in the House of Commons and elsewhere. Many persons pleaded their objections, but I never heard of a negro appearing at the bar of the house to

urge objections on behalf of the slaves. No black man came forward to say that the blacks were unworthy and undeserving, neither did the slaves propose that a part of the money should be paid by themselves. O no, it is not in human nature to request others to encumber their free gifts in that fashion; yet here we are so false to all that is reasonable that we want to encumber sovereign grace. When God says, "I will blot out your transgressions now and save you once for all; only trust my dear Son;" 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis madness at its consummation, that men should invent objections, and plead for a gospel with conditions and hard terms.

Now, what will men do if driven out of this? I have often seen the sinner in the next place turn to downright falsehood and say, "It is too late," though he knows right well it never can be too late; for the gospel says, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." It does not say, if he believes when he is twenty-five years of age, or thirty-five, or fifty-five, or one hundred and five, but it stands the same for all ages. It is never too late to believe a truth, and that is the point. —"Wilt thou believe on the Son of God? Then the sinner will say that he feels within himself that there is no hope, and so because he happens to believe a lie he will make out that God's truth also is a lie, and refuse to believe that which God solemnly declares, namely, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ! But I cannot stay to mention all these falsehoods, nor indeed to run into all the subterfuges of men who seek to escape from their own mercies. I saw in Pompeii, on a shop door, the motto, "Eme et Habe bis"—"Buy and you shall have," and I could not but think that if I were walking the streets of the New Jerusalem, I should have seen a very different device, "Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Now if there could be a shop opened in London in which all the goods were to be had without money and without price, would you quarrel with the shopkeeper, and petition for an Act of Parliament to shut his shop up, and say it was wicked, because you would rather go on the old terms and pay for all you have? Not a bit of it. Yet why is it you stand out against free grace's golden motto, "Trust in Christ and you shall have." Here is instantaneous pardon, perfect pardon, everlasting pardon, sonship through Christ, safety on earth, glory in heaven, and all for nothing, all for nothing;—the free gift of a gracious God to undeserving sinners, who trust in Jesus! Never angel had a more gracious, more god-like message of mercy than I have, how I wish I could glow with a seraph's zeal, and cry with a cherub's voice while proclaiming it. Would God that men would leave their foolish reasonings, and believe in Jesus Christ.

IV. Lastly, on this alternative, this day, may hang EVERLASTING THINGS TO MANY OF YOU. I remember well, for the anniversary of the season has almost come round, when I was placed in a similar condition to many now present, when I knew myself to be ruined and undone, and heard, for the first time truly to understand it, that word, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." I know how it stood that morning. I was like Naaman by the Jordan's brink. There flowed the flood. The old nature said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" Human nature said, "I want to feel something:

I want to have John Bunyan's experience; I want to have my mother's experience; I want to feel a broken heart; I want to groan more bitterly; I want to be kept awake so many more nights; and all that sort of thing." Suppose I had resisted still; if God's grace had not come in and made all that wicked pride of mine give way, I might have been at this hour I know not where, if still living among men. I might have been in hell, gnawing my tongue to think I should ever have heard a plain gospel sermon, and should have put far from me the gospel when it was proclaimed, and all because I would not believe what is indisputably true, and would not trust in him whom no one ever trusted in vain. This morning I know there are some in my condition here, in whom the good Spirit will say, "Wash and be clean;" and the soul will sigh, "It seems too good to be true:" but the good Spirit will reply, "Are not my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts?" Unbelief will say, "Your sins are many," but the good Spirit will answer, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Then the heart will suggest, "But I have rebelled against thee, O God, so long;" and the sweet Spirit of God will whisper, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities: Return unto me, for I am married unto thee, saith the Lord." And I do trust that now, at this very moment, many a heart will say, "I will, then, simply rest my soul's salvation upon Christ the Son of God, who is the only Saviour of the lost: I will never from this day hope to be a self-saved man, nor look to anything but to him who on the bloody tree endured the wrath of God in the behalf of as many as believe on him." Soul, if thou dost so trust Jesus, as surely as thou livest thou art saved! Go in peace. Not I speak these words only this morning from these poor lips of clay, but he who was nailed on the tree, whom all heaven adores, speaks this morning through me—and he saith to one, "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;" and to another, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee: take up thy bed and walk." O forgiven one, I charge thee do it, and as thou goest out of this house this morning, saved, and full of joy, tell others about it; never leave off telling about it, and live to love him who has saved thee! I saw the other day a picture by Rubens, in which he has painted Mary Magdalene kissing the feet of Christ while still they are gushing with founts of blood on the cross. It was a strange picture, but I felt if I had been there I would have kissed them too, though they had been crimson with his gore. O blessed feet! O blessed Saviour! O blessed Father who gave his Son to be so blessed a Saviour! O blessed Spirit of the blessed God that led our wicked, proud hearts into obedience and trust in Jesus: yea, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Lord bless you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans iii. 9—31; iv. 1—13.